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THE

WHOLE WORKS

OF THE

REV. EBENEZER ERSKINE,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT STIRLING.

CONSISTING OF

SERMONS AND DISCOURSES,

ON IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING SUBJECTS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN ENLARGED MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,

BY THE

REV. D. FRASER,

MINISTER OF THE UNITED ASSOCIATE SYNOD, KENNOWAY, FIFE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. EBENEZER ERSKINE.

The desire of becoming acquainted with the character and history of a writer, to whose pen we are indebted for entertainment or instruction, is almost universally felt; and, in some instances, the gratification of this natural wish is conducive to very valuable purposes. When we sit down to peruse publications rich in evangelical sentiment and fervid with earnest exhortation, the salutary impressions which such writings tend to produce, are likely, by the divine blessing, to be considerably aided by means of ample and authentic intelligence, previously obtained, of a corresponding spirit and behaviour, on the part of their authors. Who does not know that the charms of truth are never more alluring, and that her power is never more invincible, than when she comes recommended by a man, whose whole conduct, amidst numerous vicissitudes and trials, has afforded convincing evidence, that he belonged to the class of her earnest admirers, and most disinterested votaries? The peculiar circumstances, too, in which a writer has been placed, the singular services that in providence he may have been called to perform, and the bold appearance he may have found himself compelled to make in opposition to existing errors and defections, will so often serve to illustrate and palliate, if not completely to justify, various passages in his writings, which otherwise might appear obscure and unaccountable. For these and similar reasons, many have sincerely regretted, that in all former editions of the works of the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, the prefixed accounts of his life have been so superficial. The present Memoir, though moderate in its extent, and by no means exhausting all the materials that are now at command, is intended, in a great measure, to supply this defect.

The parentage of Mr. Erskine was highly respectable. His father, the Rev. Henry Erskine of Chirnside, was one of the younger of thirty-three children of Ralph Erskine of Shielfield,

an ancient family in the county of Merse, descended from the noble house of Mar. Interesting accounts of this worthy minister of Christ have been long in the hands of the public.* He was born at Dryburgh in the year 1624, educated at the University of Edinburgh, and ordained at Cornhill in Northumberland, probably in the year 1649. After exercising his ministry there with hopeful appearances of success, for more than twelve years, he was ejected in 1662, in common with a numerous host of faithful brethren, for non-conformity to Prelacy. Some arrears of stipend that were owing him at the time of his ejection, were unjustly and cruelly withheld. After a fruitless voyage to London to recover the debt, he took up his abode at the place of his nativity, where he resided quietly for a series of years, preaching the gospel occasionally as opportunities occurred. During this period too, he seems to have prosecuted sacred studies with peculiar ardour. Two of his Manuscripts are still extant; the one of which is dated 1664, and consists chiefly of a number of extracts from various authors on theology and church history. The other is a thick volume 12mo. containing a concise system of divinity, in the Latin tongue, which is entitled, *Theologiæ Ostium*, and seems to be his own composition. It includes short replies to six hundred and forty-seven Questions on various points, and was finished in the year 1665. But whatever comparative tranquillity he enjoyed for a season, he began about the year 1682, to undergo severe persecution. He was banished from his native country, fined in the sum of 5000 merks, and repeatedly imprisoned in different places. After the passing of the *Act of Indemnity*, however, he was restored to liberty, and preached for some time at Monilaws, in the parish of Branxton, Northumberland, and afterwards at Whitsom, a village on the north of the Tweed. During his residence at Whitsom, it pleased God to make him the instrument of converting the celebrated Mr. Thomas Boston of Etterick, then a boy about ten years of age. Mr. Boston himself, in his "Soliloquy on the Art of Man-fishing," ascribes his first saving impressions of the truth to sermons which he heard delivered at Newton of Whitsom, by "a preacher, who spared neither his body, his credit, nor reputation, to gain the souls of men."

Shortly after the happy Revolution of 1688, this venerable man accepted a call to the parish of Chirnside, where he continued to discharge his office with exemplary fidelity and much success till he entered the joy of his Lord on the 10th of August, 1696, in the seventy-second year of his age. Amidst all the hardships he suffered for the sake of the gospel, this excellent minister found great cause to adore the goodness of God, not only in cheering him with the consolations of his Spirit, but also in wonderfully providing for the temporal subsistence of himself and family. He met with much kindness both from relations and from stran-

* See Wodrow's History of the Church of Scotland, Calamy's Lives of the Ejected Ministers, &c.

gers, and had occasion to observe many striking instances, in which the most seasonable relief was unexpectedly administered. The manner of his departure was singularly edifying. Being seized with a fever, and aware that his end was approaching, he called for his children, and addressed them with an air of heavenly authority. Of nine that were then living, six were present. As a dying man, and a dying father, he bore his testimony to the superior excellence of the ways of God; told them that the advantages of serious religion infinitely outweigh all the difficulties that can possibly attend it; assured them that as he had never repented, so more especially *then*, he did not repent of any hardships he had endured in his Master's service; and expressed his full persuasion that he was going to the kingdom of heaven, and that if they were followers of his faith and patience, he and they should ere long have a joyful meeting there. After this, in the most solemn and impressive manner, he charged and engaged them, one by one, to be faithful servants to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and his own God in Christ, and to keep his way, as ever they would *look him in the face* in the great day of judgment. And, in fine, having blessed them, and committed his beloved wife and them to the care of Providence, he commended his spirit into the hands of his redeeming God and Father. He was interred in the church-yard of Chirnside; and a Latin epitaph, with a translation subjoined, composed by the Rev. John Dysert of Coldingham, representing chiefly the incorruptible integrity and unshaken resolution which adorned his character, was engraven on his tombstone. The stone was renewed by his sons, Ebenezer and Ralph, when they made a visit to that part of the country, upwards of thirty or forty years after their father's death. A few years ago, too, an estimable inhabitant of Chirnside, observing that this stone was greatly defaced, much to his credit, put himself to the trouble of repairing it. It will gratify the pious reader also to learn, that, in consequence of the laudable exertions of the same individual, and a few others, both of the clergy and laity, an elegant monument, about twenty feet high, closely adjoining the original stone, and bearing an appropriate inscription, has been erected by subscription this same year 1825, to the memory of the Rev. Henry Erskine, as a venerable sufferer in the cause of truth.

Mr. Ebenezer's mother, Margaret Halcro, a native of Orkney, was not unworthy of such a husband. According to communications lately received by one of her descendants from Robert Nicolson, Esq., Kirkwall, it appears that she was a great-grand-daughter of Harry Halcro, of that ilk, and Lady Barbara Stewart, that Harry Halcro was a lineal descendant of Halcro, Prince of Denmark; and that Lady Barbara was the youngest daughter of Robert, Earl of Orkney, son of James V. But Margaret Halcro possessed a far higher distinction than the blood of nobles or kings can impart—sincere and decided piety. The Certificate she received at the time of her leaving Orkney, an exact copy of which has been found in one of Mr. Ralph Er-

skine's manuscripts, is much to her credit.* Amidst the many privations and distresses to which she and her large family, along with her conscientious husband, were subjected, during the unhappy reigns of Charles II. and his brother James II., she adorned her profession by Christian magnanimity and patience. The evening of her life was spent chiefly at Portmoak, where she experienced from Ebenezer and his amiable partner every kind attention that could flow from the purest gratitude and the most affectionate reverence. Having survived her husband nearly thirty years, she died there with a hope "full of immortality," January 14th, 1725, in the seventy-eighth year of her age. Her remains were deposited in the chapel ground of Scotlandwell, a village in the parish of Portmoak, where a suitable Latin inscription, somewhat defaced, is still to be seen on a stone, which her sons Ebenezer and Ralph erected in memory of a valuable and much loved mother.

Mr. Erskine of Chirnside, was twice married; and, by each of his partners he had several children. To the first family belonged Philip, who, having conformed to the Church of England, became Rector of Knaresdale in the county of Northumberland: Also, a daughter, who was born in the year 1653, gave her hand to a Mr. Balderston of Edinburgh, and died at an advanced age, October 19th, 1738. The Rev. Mr. Boston makes frequent mention in his Memoirs, of this Mrs. Balderston, as an eminent Christian and esteemed friend, whose prayers on his behalf he particularly requested. The eldest of the second family, (viz. Margaret Halcro's,) of whom we have any account, was Henry, a student of Medicine, who died at Chirnside, the 9th July, 1696, in the twentieth year of his age, and exactly a month before his father.

EBENEZER ERSKINE, the proper subject of this Memoir, was born on the 22nd of June, 1680, nearly five years before his brother Ralph. The place of his birth was probably Dryburgh; where *the part* of the house which was occupied by his father and

* It is expressed in the following terms:—

"At the Kirk of Evie, May 27, 1666.

"To all and sundry into whose hands these presents shall come, be it known that the bearer hereof, Margaret Halcro, lawful daughter to the deceased Hugh Halcro, in the isle of Weir, and Margaret Stewart his spouse, hath lived in the parish of Evie from her infancy, in good fame and report; is a discreet, godly young woman, and, to our certain knowledge, free of all scandal, reproach, or blame. As, also, that she is descended, of her father, of the house of Halcro, which is a very ancient and honourable family in the Orkneys—the noble and potent Earl of Early and Lairds of Dun in Angus; and by her mother, of the Laird of Burscobe in Galloway. In witness whereof, we, the Minister and Clerk, have subscribed these presents at Evie, day, month, year of God, and place foresaid, and give way to all other noblemen, gentlemen, and ministers, to do the same.

MR. MORISON, Minister of Evie,
GEORGE BALLENTINE,
(Sic subscribitur.) JAMES TRAIL,
WILLIAM BALLENDEN,

1666.

family is said to be still industriously preserved by the present Lord Buchan, as a relic and memorial of them. The name Ebenezer is understood to have been given to him by his parents, in testimony of their fervent gratitude to that God, whose goodness and mercy had followed them amidst all their hardships and difficulties, and constrained them to set up a pillar of remembrance, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

The particulars of Ebenezer's early life are now almost wholly unknown. During his first sixteen years, he enjoyed the united advantages of a father's guardianship and a mother's care; and by the Divine blessing on parental instruction and example, he seems to have devoted his youth to the fear and service of God. Having learned the elements of literature at Chirnside, under the immediate superintendence of his father, he prosecuted his studies at the University of Edinburgh, where he received a regular education for the sacred office. For some time, he was chaplain and tutor in the house of the Earl of Rothes, at Leslie. Providence having thus cast his lot within the bounds of the Presbytery of Kirkaldy, he applied to that Presbytery for license; and, accordingly, after he had passed through the usual course of exercises for trial, they licensed him to preach the gospel, probably in the year 1702.

One considerable memorial of Ebenezer's youthful piety and diligence is furnished by a large Note-book, written in the years 1699, 1700, 1701, 1702,—at this moment in our hands. It contains "Some memorable passages in Church history," and copious extracts from various theological works he had been perusing; as Charnock's Discourses, Ferguson on the Sufferings of Christ, Wilkin's Gift of Prayer, Polhill's *Speculum Theologiæ*, and other writers. A great part of the book too, is occupied by notes of Sermons, which, during those years, he had heard delivered from the pulpit by esteemed clergymen of that age, as the Rev. Messrs. Alexander Cowper, James Webster, George Hamilton, John Moncrieff, John Shaw, George Gillespie, and others.

The excellent character and useful discourses of this young Preacher soon recommended him to public notice. On the 26th of May, 1703, he received a unanimous call to the parish of Portmoak, to succeed the Rev. John Wilson, who had been translated to Kirkaldy: and having given ample satisfaction with regard to his qualifications for the Christian ministry, he was ordained at Portmoak, in the month of September, that year, by the same Presbytery to which he had formerly been indebted for license.

Portmoak is a sequestered village, pleasantly situated at the bottom of the west end of the Lomond-hills, and on the banks of Loch Leven,—commanding a prospect of the whole lake, including the Castle where the unfortunate Mary, Queen of Scots, was confined. In this retired spot, Mr. Erskine entered on his parochial duties with activity and zeal, and at the same time enjoyed, at the commencement of his ministry, choice opportunities

for devotion and mental improvement, which laid the foundation of his future eminence and usefulness.

Anxious to acquire accurate and extensive views of the truth, he spent a great proportion of his time in study, where he perused with delight the oracles of God, and some of the best writers on theology, as Turretine, Witsius, Owen, and others. He was not insensible, at the same time, to the advantages that may be derived from frequent and familiar conversation on religious topics, with persons of intelligence and piety. For some time after his ordination, his views of divine truth, it is said, in common with those of a considerable number of pious ministers of the Church of Scotland at that period, were not quite clear and correct, but consisted of a confused mixture of legal and evangelical doctrine. It pleased God, however, to give him more enlightened and satisfactory conceptions, and to bless, for that purpose, the interviews he had with his brother Ralph and others. Nay, according to his own ingenuous acknowledgments to his children and friends, he was more deeply indebted to no one, as an instrument of enabling him to understand "the way of God more perfectly," than to his partner, Alison Turpie, daughter of Mr. Alexander Turpie, writer in Leven, Fifeshire, a young lady of engaging dispositions and undissembled piety, whom he married on the 2d of February, 1704. A confidential conversation, which he accidentally overheard between her and Ralph, on the subject of their religious experience, is thought to have signally contributed towards the happy change that took place in Ebenezer's sentiments and impressions with relation to the gospel. Whilst they were opening their minds to each other without reserve, in a bower in his garden immediately beneath the window of his study, which then happened to be open, he listened with great eagerness to their interesting communications. Their views and feelings appeared so different from his own, that he instantly felt himself obliged to conclude that they possessed valuable attainments, to which he was a stranger, and the impression seems to have remained, till, with regard to vital and evangelical Christianity, he became not merely almost, but altogether, such as they were.*

Mr. Erskine was not only a conscientious student, but a faithful preacher of the gospel. Besides the usual services of the Sabbath, conformably to the practice of some of his brethren in those days, he established a weekly lecture on the Thursday. In all his discourses, particularly after undergoing that essential improvement in his views and experience, to which we have just adverted, his constant object was to exhibit and recommend the Redeemer in his person, offices, salvation, and grace, and to persuade his hearers to place their entire dependence upon Him, as at once their "righteousness and strength." The advances he was enabled to make in knowledge and in grace produced a happy effect, even upon his manner of delivering his discourses.

* See the Memoir of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, contained in Gospel Truth, by the Rev. John Brown, of Whitburn.

For a few years after the commencement of his ministry, he felt considerable difficulty in public speaking, and was accustomed to fix his eyes on a certain spot of the wall opposite to the pulpit, from which he could not venture to move them without the imminent hazard of losing the command of his ideas. But, afterwards, he became a most undaunted speaker, was fully master of his mind and his voice, looked around on his audience with a dignified, yet pleasant and engaging aspect, and commanded a deep and universal attention.

The large Note-book mentioned above, besides the materials formerly specified, contains a Diary which Mr. Erskine began in November, 1707, and continued for the space of about twenty years. Owing, in a great degree, to the circumstance that it is written in short-hand, according to a rude and antiquated system of stenography, this treasure has long been neglected as a sealed book. But the characters having been lately deciphered, it is found to consist chiefly of a register of the Author's own varied feelings and exercises as a Christian, including occasional notices of the measure of liberty and success with which he was helped to perform his official duties. The unhappy dulness of frame he sometimes felt, gave occasion for humbling confessions of his own unworthiness and weakness; but the freedom and boldness he often experienced in the pulpit, with the salutary effects that the precious doctrines of the gospel seemed to produce on himself and his hearers, supplied matter of devout acknowledgments to that God whom he served. To gratify the pious reader, it may be proper to give the following specimen of these grateful reflections. It was written on the evening of a Sabbath which had been comfortably spent, a few months after the death of Alison Turpie, that excellent woman, whose character has just been noticed.

"Anno 1721, Jan. 1st, being Sabbath evening.—This day I have been about my Master's work. I lectured on Canticles vi. from verse 4th; 'Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirza, comely as Jerusalem, and terrible as an army with banners.' I designed to have insisted on some of the verses following, but this one verse took up the whole of the time. And what the Lord helped to say was sweet and savoury; particularly, in answering these five questions from the latter part of the verse. 1st. Why the Church of God is compared to an army? 2dly. Who is the Captain-general of the army? 3dly. Who are the soldiers of the army, and wherein lies their excellency? 4thly. What is the banner, and why *banners* in the plural? 5thly. What is it that makes the Church of God terrible as an army with banners? ——After lecture, I preached upon Isaiah xxvi. 19, particularly on the middle part of the verse; 'Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust.' The doctrine I insisted on was, that the resurrection of the saints will be a time of great joy and singing: Where I took occasion to handle these three Questions. 1st. Who will be the singers at that day? 2dly. What will be their songs? 3dly. After what manner will they sing? The Lord made what was delivered on these heads sweet. He helped to speak, and I hope

he refreshed my own soul, and the souls of many of my hearers. In my first prayer at the beginning of the work of the day, considering that it was the first day of the year, I took occasion to ask a new year's gift from the Lord; and I hope and desire to believe he has given it, not only by the assistance he gave in public in delivering his messages: But this evening, when alone, I was beginning to turn a little melancholy at the thoughts of the want of a dear wife; but, oh! the Lord turned my heart and thoughts towards himself, and begat in me a desire and longing for himself and the enjoyment of him in heaven; so that I was made to conclude and say, I cannot think but my treasure is in heaven, since my heart is there; for Christ himself, the faithful witness, says that where the treasure is, there will the heart be also; and he is my witness, that my principal desire is in heaven. O, whom have I in heaven but Him, and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides him. O, the Lord be thanked for this new year's day, and new year's visit."

While Mr. Erskine served God with his spirit in the pulpit, he was equally attentive to the other duties of the ministry, as public catechising, ministerial visitation of families, and visiting the sick. In catechising, he often examined his hearers on the subjects of his public discourses; that the truth, thus repeatedly brought forward, might make the more lasting impressions on their memories and hearts. In the visitation of families, he discovered much gravity and dignity, mingled with ardent love to the souls of his people. His general demeanour, though prudent and becoming, was by no means forbidding and austere. On the contrary, when walking for necessary recreation through the bounds of his parish, he often made short friendly calls at the houses of his parishioners; expressed his happiness at finding them well; partook, without ceremony, as circumstances directed, of a homely repast; and recommended religion by his lively and entertaining, as well as instructive conversation. But when he made a ministerial visit, he thought it right to lay aside, in some degree, his usual vivacity, and to guard against those innocent pleasantries which at other times he was apt to indulge. Assuming all that solemnity of appearance and deportment which distinguished him on the most sacred occasions, he generally introduced himself with the words which our Lord required his disciples to use when they entered any habitation: "Peace be to this house." He commonly proposed a few practical questions to each adult, then examined and encouraged the children, and after a pertinent word of exhortation, he concluded with a very particular and affectionate prayer.

Visiting the sick was another exercise in which he discovered the same gravity, wisdom, and affection. He stood prepared alike to sound a necessary alarm in the ears of the thoughtless sinner overtaken by affliction, and to speak words in season for the consolation of the dejected Christian. The following anecdote has been considered worthy of remembrance. When visiting *Ann Meiglo*, a poor but godly woman, she thus addressed him:

"O sir, I am just lying here, a poor useless creature." "Think you so?" was his reply. "I think," added she, "what is true, sir, that if I were away to heaven, I would be of some use to glorify God without sin." "Indeed, Ann," the good man kindly answered, "I think you are glorifying God here, by your resignation and submission to his will; and that in the face of many difficulties, and under many distresses. In heaven, the saints have not your burdens to groan under: your praise, burdened as you are, is more wonderful to me, and, I hope, acceptable to God."

Aware of the vast importance of early impressions, Ebenezer was at great pains in promoting the spiritual welfare of the young. Not satisfied with addressing them particularly in the houses of their parents in the usual course of visitation, he superintended their moral and religious instruction in the parish school. It was his general practice to visit the school on Saturday: and after examining the scholars he exhorted and prayed with them. Instead of going himself to the school, he sometimes invited the children to come to him in the manse; and with this invitation they gladly complied, knowing that the minister never conversed with them on serious subjects with more endearing familiarity, or exhorted them to choose the paths of wisdom in more animating terms than when he met them in his own house. His benevolent attentions to the best interests of the rising generation were happily seconded by the labours of excellent teachers; while his endeavours to preserve order and decorum in the parish were powerfully aided by the pious vigilance and prudent activity of a considerable number of ruling elders.

Another means which Mr. Erskine employed for promoting religion in his parish was the establishment of praying societies. In the year 1714 he composed a set of rules for their direction, which all the members were expected to subscribe; and he continued to assist and cheer them by his presence from month to month, as often as his other avocations would permit.

This faithful minister of Christ did not labour in vain. He was mightily encouraged by perceiving the value that was put upon his services, and the success with which they were crowned. Not only was the place of worship crowded on the Lord's day, but the Thursday lecture was well attended. Even at diets of examination, a large audience was generally present. The substance of his discourses was committed to writing by a number of his hearers, some of whom were accustomed to refresh the memories of their relatives and neighbours by reading to them, on the Sabbath evening, the notes which they had taken during the day. The people distinguished themselves at once by a thirst for knowledge, by a spirit of devotion, and by the propriety of their general conduct. During the time of public prayer and praise, the hearts of the worshippers seemed deeply engaged. It was Mr. Erskine's practice, often to close the public services of the Sabbath, by singing the concluding verses of the seventy-second Psalm. And "O," added a pious eye and ear-witness, when relating this circumstance, "with what rapture was it sung!

Never can I hear such delightful melody till I get to heaven." Mr. Erskine's labours, in short, were so happily successful, that the parish of Portmoak became "like a field which the Lord hath blessed." The exemplary lives, and triumphant deaths, of not a few of its inhabitants gave evidence that the good seed he was enabled to sow was watered by the dews of heaven. Nor was the rich increase confined to the period of his ministry amongst them. It may be affirmed, without flattery, that to this day, the people of that parish, generally speaking, are superior to many, with regard to their attainments in Christian knowledge, and their marked veneration for godliness and honesty; and that, in all probability, the salutary fruits of Mr. Erskine's ministry will continue for several generations to come.

The benefit of this good man's labours was not limited to those that were privileged with his immediate pastoral inspection. The celebrity of his character, as a faithful preacher and a valiant defender of the truth, allured many serious Christians from other parishes, and even from places at the distance of sixty or seventy miles, to attend the administration of the Lord's Supper at Portmoak. So great was the concourse of hearers, that it was often necessary to form two separate assemblies in the open air, in addition to the one which met in the church; and so remarkable was the success attending the word, that many, on their deathbeds, spoke of the hills of Portmoak as Bethels, where God Almighty had favoured them with saving manifestations of his glory and love. On sacramental occasions, too, in other parishes, in various districts of the country, Mr. Erskine's services were uncommonly acceptable; and accompanied with an abundant blessing. The clergymen with whom he corresponded on such occasions were men distinguished alike for soundness of principle and holiness of practice. Such were his esteemed neighbours, the Rev. Messrs. Wardrope of Ballingray, Gibb of Cleish, M'Gill of Kinross, Bathgate of Orwell, Shaw of Leslie, Currie of Kinglassie, Gillespie of Strathmiglo, Hogg of Carnock, and Ralph Erskine, his brother, of Dunfermline. Among his correspondents at a greater distance, were Messrs. William Moncrieff of Largo, Pitcairn of Dysart, Kidd of Queensferry, James Webster of Edinburg, and John Williamson of Inveresk.

It must now also be stated, that after Mr. Erskine had laboured at Portmoak with great pleasure and success for many years, it seemed good to an all-wise Providence to transfer him to a wider and more conspicuous sphere. Several attempts to remove him had proved abortive. After the death of Mr. M'Gill, he received, in the year 1728, a unanimous and urgent call to Kinross. Soon after, he was called, with equal unanimity and earnestness, to the populous parish of Kirkaldy. But, in both instances, the active and affectionate efforts of the people of Portmoak to retain him, and his own strong attachment to them, prevented the desired translation. But a third minister being wanted at Stirling, the Rev. Alexander Hamilton and the whole population of that town and parish turned their eyes to Mr. Erskine, and gave him

a pressing and unanimous call; of which, after maturely weighing all circumstances, he judged it his duty to accept. His translation, in consequence, took place, at the beginning of autumn, 1731. His farewell sermon, at Portmoak, was preached from Acts xx. 22: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there." "This was a sorrowful day," says a respectable native of that parish, "both to him and his people. The retrospect of twenty-eight years of great felicity which were for ever gone, and the uncertainty of what might follow, bathed their faces with tears, and awoke the voice of mourning and wo throughout the congregation, for the loss of a pastor, the constant object of whose ministry was to recommend to their souls the exalted Redeemer in his person, offices, and grace,—who had laboured to rouse the inconsiderate to repentance and serious concern; and who had not failed, when religious impressions took place, to preserve and promote them with unwearied diligence. They had always found in him the affection of a father, and brother, and friend. Even when he administered the merited reproof, or sounded the necessary alarm, they knew it flowed from an affectionate heart, which, while lamenting their sins, loved their precious souls. So much was the minister himself affected, that it was with much difficulty he could proceed till he reached the end of the doctrinal part of his discourse, when he was obliged to pause; and, overcome with grief, concluded abruptly, saying, "My friends, I find that neither you nor I can bear the application of this subject."*

Notwithstanding the dissolution of the pastoral relation betwixt this valuable minister and the worthy people of Portmoak, they still cherished for each other a warm affection. One or two individuals removed with him to Stirling; all of them continued to regard him with sincere veneration. Nor did he fail to reciprocate their kindness. When any of them had occasion to take a journey to Stirling, he received them with great cordiality, and gave them pious and animating counsels; and as often as he could make it convenient, he repeated his longed-for visits to Portmoak, and refreshed his old friends and parishioners, by his evangelical discourses and kind attentions.

In the new and important sphere of ministerial exertion which he now occupied, he did not disappoint the high expectations formed by the inhabitants of Stirling. In performing the public

* This passage is extracted from an account of Ebenezer Erskine in manuscript, written by Mr. J—— B——, Portmoak. The writer of this Memoir cheerfully embraces the present opportunity of renewing his grateful acknowledgments to that gentleman, for the assistance he has received from his valuable manuscript. A few years ago, he took the liberty to bring forward nearly all its materials in the ample details respecting Mr. Erskine which appeared in different numbers of the Christian Repository, Vols. 3d, 4th, and 5th. In drawing up the present concise Memoir, he has not scrupled to avail himself of his own former labours for that Miscellany; while some interesting particulars subsequently derived from various sources are now added.

and private duties of his office, he maintained the same zeal and assiduity which he had discovered at Portmoak. His ministrations were eminently popular and useful. Soon after his admission, he preached a course of sermons on Christ as the Foundation laid in Zion, (Isa. xxviii. 16;) which, by the blessing of Heaven, proved the means of conversion and edification to many. The Memoirs of a Teacher of youth, noted for intelligence and piety, supply one of the numerous instances of the happy effects arising from his labours. "I went for ordinary," says Mr. Archibald, "to Stirling, where the gospel was preached in great purity and simplicity by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine; which tended much to acquaint me with, and establish me in, 'the faith once delivered to the saints.'"*

It was shortly after Mr. Erskine's translation to Stirling that the SECESSION commenced; and the conspicuous part he acted with regard to that important event seems now to demand our attention. It will be proper, however, to begin by adverting to that noble fortitude in the cause of truth which he evinced in some public appearances, occasioned by certain ecclesiastical proceedings, that paved the way for ultimate withdrawment from the judicatories of the established Church.

We allude, in particular, to his bold and decided exertions in favour of the doctrines of grace, during the memorable controversy relative to the book entitled *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. For a considerable time prior to the act of the General Assembly condemning that book, he had cordially embraced and faithfully preached the pure gospel of the grace of God. With unfeigned concern he found several brethren of the Synod of Fife teaching what is styled *Neonomian* doctrine; and in opposition to that dangerous, though specious and palatable scheme, he uniformly held that Christ and his blessings are freely and unconditionally exhibited to sinners in the gospel; that the everlasting righteousness of the Son of God is the only ground of justification; and that ministers should "beware of every thing that has the least tendency to foster a sinner in his hope of salvation by the works of the law." Entertaining these evangelical sentiments, he deeply regretted the condemnatory Act referred to, and was fully prepared to co operate with Messrs. James Hogg of Carnock, Thomas Boston of Etterick, and other zealous friends of the gospel, in measures calculated to procure its repeal, or, at least to vindicate those precious truths, which, in their apprehension, it had grievously injured. The Representation and Petition on this subject, presented to the Assembly May 11th, 1721, though originally composed by Mr. Boston, was revised and perfected by Mr. Erskine. He was employed also to prepare the first draft of the "Answers to the Twelve Queries," afterwards enlarged and improved by the Rev. Gabriel Wilson of Maxton—a masterly production, which has undergone many impressions, and which

* See a small book, lately republished, entitled, "The Experience of Alexander Archibald."

discusses the points at issue with a perspicuity and energy, that have commanded the admiration of the celebrated Mr. Hervey, and others, who had no immediate concern in the contest. Ebenezer, too, defended the conduct of the representing brethren in an able and respectful letter, addressed to a neighbouring clergyman.*

The Assembly, aware of the general offence which their violent condemnation of the Marrow had given, and influenced, perhaps, by the clear and forcible answers returned to the *twelve* queries, which, in ludicrous allusion to the number of the *twelve* Representers they had thought proper to propose, were pleased, May 21st, 1722, to pass a large explanatory Act relating to the Marrow, expressed in more moderate terms than the former. Even this new act, however, contained several positions contrary to sound doctrine; it confirmed instead of rescinding the act complained of; and the twelve brethren, instead of receiving the thanks of the Assembly for their seasonable remonstrance, were solemnly rebuked and admonished. Besides, they were reviled in various publications, as men of wild and Antinomian principles,—innovators in religion, who published tenets opposite to the Confession of Faith and Catechisms,—enemies to Christian morality,—troublers of Israel, puffed up with vanity and arrogance, and anxious to exalt themselves at the expense of their brethren. Similar reproaches were often cast on them by the dominant clergy of that age from the pulpit, particularly in sermons preached at the opening of Synods. Their submission, in fine, to the acts of Assembly respecting the Marrow, was urged with rigour; and in several instances, ill-founded complaints against their public discourses were presented before the church courts.

Owing to the vehemence of Principal Haddow of St. Andrews, who took the lead in impugning the Marrow, the five representing brethren of the Synod of Fife, viz. Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, Hogg, Bathgate, with Ralph Erskine and James Wardlaw of Dunfermline, were treated with the most marked severity. At several meetings of Synod they were denounced as transgressors, and questioned in the most rigorous and inquisitorial manner. Strenuous efforts were employed to induce them to subscribe anew the Confession of Faith, not merely as received by the Church of Scotland, 1647, but as explained by the condemnatory act of 1722—a proposal which they unanimously and justly rejected.† At a meeting of the Synod of Fife in September, 1721, some of Ebenezer's discourses were judicially complained of. In May, 1725, he was even publicly arraigned before the Commission of the General Assembly, by the Rev. Andrew Anderson, one of the ministers of St. Andrews, whom he had once numbered amongst his intimate friends. The complaints referred to no less than seven of his sermons, viz. those from 2 Chron. xx.

* This letter has been published in the Christian Magazine, Vol. xiii. pp. 376—381.

† See Appendix to "Faith no Fancy," by the Rev. Ralph Erskine, p. 31, 33. Ed. 1745.

20; Psalm lxxxix. 16; cxxxviii. 6; Luke ii. 28; John vi. 66; Tit. iii. 8; Rev. iii. 4. Mr. Erskine was accused in his absence, and ten years had elapsed between the delivery of some of these obnoxious discourses, and the time when the accusations were preferred.

Under all these teasing circumstances, he was helped to discover an invincible zeal for what he prized as divine and important truth, blended with Christian meekness and candour. He was accustomed to speak of the Act 1720 as an oversight. Notwithstanding the protest which he and his brethren had taken, he forbore publicly recommending the book condemned by the Assembly; and even when he spoke favourably of it in private, he qualified his eulogy, by telling the people that it contained some unguarded expressions. Towards those clergymen, too, from whom he had experienced the most injurious and illiberal treatment, he manifested a gentle and forgiving spirit. Nevertheless, as appears from many passages of his writings, or rather from their whole spirit and scope, his attachment to the leading doctrines of the Marrow remained unshaken. On some occasions, too, expressions fell from his lips, that for a time at least overawed and confounded his opposers. Thus at a meeting of Synod at Cupar in Fife, when some members had openly denied the Father's gift of Christ to sinners of mankind, he rose and said; "Moderator, our Lord Jesus says of himself, 'My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.' This he uttered to a promiscuous multitude; and let me see the man who dares to affirm that he said wrong." This short speech, aided by the dignity and energy with which it was delivered, made an uncommon impression on the Synod, and on all that were present.

With regard to the charges preferred against his discourses by Mr. Anderson, whilst he disavowed such expressions as were falsely or erroneously imputed to him, he never shrunk from attesting and maintaining those scriptural sentiments which he had really uttered. For his own vindication, too, he published the sermons objected to; and in prefaces prefixed to the first editions, he refuted the censures of his accusers. The wisdom of Providence strikingly appears in thus rendering those very imputations, which wore so dark and ruinous an aspect towards Mr. Erskine, the occasion of increasing his celebrity, and extending his usefulness. To this providential arrangement, he himself devoutly adverts in the following terms: "It is very probable, that this," viz. the Sermon on Rev. iii. 4, "and some other sermons now designed for the press, had slept in perpetual silence among my short-hand manuscripts, if holy and wise Providence, which overrules us in our designs and inclinations, had not in a manner forced me to yield to their publication, for my own necessary defence; when the earnest entreaty of some, dear to the Lord, could not prevail with me to fall in with any such proposal."*

* Whoever wishes to be thoroughly acquainted with the controversy relating to the Marrow, would do well to peruse Mr. Brown's Gospel Truth

The same undaunted courage in defending the truth by which the subject of this Memoir signalized himself during the agitation of the controversy regarding the Marrow, was manifested on occasion of the process instituted against the Rev. John Simpson, Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow, for denying the necessary existence and supreme divinity of the Son of God. It was in the year 1729, that the General Assembly, after a discussion of eight days, came to a final decision, in that interesting cause. Although a sentence of deposition was generally expected, and had been urged by the greater number of presbyteries, the Professor was not deposed, but merely suspended from the discharge of his office. Mr. Erskine was not a member of Assembly that year, but expressed his cordial approbation of the dissent from that unduly lenient decision, which Mr. Boston with singular intrepidity declared. He only regretted that his learned and godly friend did not insist on his dissent and protest being entered on the records of the court, for the honour of Christ and the instruction of posterity. Several years before the matter was brought to this termination, he composed an excellent paper, entitled, "A Testimony to the true Deity of the Son of God, by the Session of Portmoak, to be laid before the Presbytery, for transmission to the General Assembly." In his public discourses, in fine, he deemed it his duty to give solemn and repeated warnings to his hearers, to beware lest any man rob them of this momentous doctrine of revealed religion. One of these warnings occurs, for example, in the Sermon from Exod. xx. 2.

Mr. Erskine was distinguished by generous and active zeal as well for the rights and liberties of the Christian people, as for the purity and simplicity of evangelical doctrine. Every one acquainted with the ecclesiastical history of Scotland is aware, that the Secession, in which he took the lead, was occasioned no less by measures hostile to religious liberty, than by the opposition made, or indifference shown, to the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. But fully to state the grounds of the Secession, or minutely to detail the various circumstances which issued in his complete separation from the national establishment, and in the regular organization of the Secession Church, would not suit the limits of this Memoir; nor is such a statement or detail necessary. The revival of patronage by Queen Anne's ministry in 1712; the rigour with which that act was, in different instances, enforced; the contempt thrown by the Assembly in 1732, on one Petition subscribed by forty-two ministers, and on another subscribed by many hundreds of elders and people, who united in humbly representing the growing defections of the Church, and earnestly soliciting redress; the act of the same Assembly decreeing that, where an accepted presentation did not take place, the decisive power of electing ministers for the supply of vacant congregations is competent *only* to a conjunct meeting of heritors and elders,

accurately stated and defended, &c. The Marrow of Modern Divinity itself, with Boston's judicious Notes, ought also to be carefully read.

no other qualification of those heritors being required but that they be Protestants; the remonstrances of Mr. E. Erskine in his celebrated sermon from Psalm cxviii. 22; preached at Perth, October 10th, 1732, at the opening of the Synod of Perth and Stirling; the accusations preferred against him for those bold remonstrances by the Rev. Mr. Mercer, of Aberfalgie, and others, with the act of Synod finding him censurable; his protest and appeal, and consequent appearance before the Assembly in 1733, by whom he was rebuked; his protest against the decision of the General Assembly, to which the Rev. William Wilson, of Perth, Alexander Moncrieff, of Abernethy, and James Fisher, then of Kinclaven, gave in a written adherence; the suspension of the four brethren by the Commission of Assembly in August following, notwithstanding numerous petitions in their favour; the still severer measures adopted by the Commission at their meeting in November the same year, when, by the casting vote of Mr. John Goldie, the Moderator, it was carried, that they should proceed immediately to inflict a higher censure, and it was consequently decreed by a great majority, to "loose the relation of the said four ministers to their respective charges, and declare them no longer ministers of this church;" the meeting of these four excommunicated brethren, December 25th, 1733, at the bridge of *Gairney* near Kinross, where they resolved to constitute themselves into a Presbytery, and "Mr. Ebenezer Erskine was, with their unanimous consent, desired to be their mouth to the Lord in this solemn action, and was enabled, with much enlargement of soul, to consecrate and dedicate them to the Lord, and to the service of his church;"* the conciliatory methods to which the Assembly 1734 had recourse; the resolution of the brethren not to accede to the national church at that time, being convinced that the ends of their separation were not yet gained; the libel, consisting of ten articles, with which they were served by the Assembly 1738; the determination of the Seceding ministers altogether to decline the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts; their formal deposition by the Assembly, May 15th, 1740;—these and other occurrences relative to the origin and progress of the Associate body, are narrated in different publications, to which the curious reader may have easy access.†

It may be right, however, to contemplate Mr. Erskine's character, as it is affected by his attitude and behaviour as the standard-bearer of the Secession. How fair his reputation as a Christian, a minister, and a member of society, stood in the eyes of those who had the best opportunities of knowing him, when he commenced his career in that capacity, will clearly appear from the following quotations taken from the petitions on his behalf,

* The Rev. William Wilson's Continuation of the Defence of Reformation Principles, pp. 152, 153.

† See the Re-exhibition of the Testimony; Brown's History of the Secession; Jaffray of Kilmarnock's excellent "Essay on the Reasons of Secession from the National Church of Scotland;" and the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Art. Seceder.

transmitted from Stirling, where he then exercised his ministry. The Presbytery of Stirling assure the Commission, "that Mr. Erskine's character is so established in that part of the church, that the authority of the Assembly condemning cannot lessen it, and that in the present case, such condemnation will tend to heighten it." "We beg leave to observe," say the Kirk session of Stirling, "that having had a trial of Mr. Erskine's ministerial gifts and labours these two years bygone, we cannot but own, according to our discerning and experience, his Lord and Master hath endowed him with a very edifying gift of teaching and preaching the gospel, and many other good qualifications, every way fitting him for the office of the ministry, and particularly in this city and congregation; which, together with the great pains he has taken in the other parts of his ministerial labours, and we hope not without success, and all attended with a very tender walk, wise and prudent behaviour, have made him most acceptable to us, and persons of all distinctions in this place." In fine, the Magistrates and town-Council of that place inform the Commission, "That after two full years' acquaintance with Mr. Erskine, they find him to be a man of a *peaceable* disposition, of a religious walk and conversation, to be every way fitted and qualified for discharging the work of the ministry among them, and that he has discharged the same to their great satisfaction." They conclude with deprecating the suspension of Mr. Erskine, as a measure calculated only to "alienate our people's hearts from the Assembly."

This venerable man has been severely censured for declaiming in public discourses against those proceedings of the church courts which met his disapprobation. Candour and impartiality, however, require us to observe, that in resorting to that method of resisting error and vindicating truth, he and his associates were by no means singular. The Rev. Messrs. Currie of Kinglassie, Willison of Dundee, Bisset of Aberdeen, and several others who never joined the Secession, were accustomed to take the same liberties. It is but fair also to hear and consider the reasons assigned by himself, for this part of his conduct, as the Preface to his Sermon at Perth, which gave occasion to his prosecution, and which he deemed it requisite to publish soon after it was preached. "If any think," says he, "upon the reading of the following discourse, that there is too great freedom used with respect to the present steps of defection, let it be remembered, that there is now no other way left to bear testimony against such things, but by warning the world against them from press or pulpit; representations and petitions from ministers or church members at the bar being utterly disregarded, and no access to enter any protest or dissent against those proceedings in the public records, for the exoneration of conscience, or the information of our posterity that such things did not pass in our day without a struggle and testimony against them."

With unfeigned regret we observe, that a highly respectable clergyman, and one who for many years has been considered as

at the head of the more evangelical class in the Church of Scotland, discovers in a late publication* a pretty strong propensity to disparage the memory of men who nobly contended for the liberties of the Christian people. It is impossible, within the bounds of this Memoir, to advert to the various harsh expressions and inaccurate statements of the Reverend Baronet.† We must remark, however, that he speaks of the offence taken by "the popular *demagogues* among the clergy" at the act of Assembly 1732, relative to the settlement of churches; and if we mistake not, appears to insinuate, that the Secession is to be attributed merely to the keen feelings of Ebenezer Erskine and his associates, irritated by the precipitant measures of the ecclesiastical courts. The treatment they met with from the leaders of the *moderate* party, was indeed, in many instances, *confessedly* rigorous, unjust, and oppressive. Had they not felt it keenly, they must have been utterly void of the common sensibility of men; and had no portion of human irritation ever mingled itself with their pious zeal for the glory of God and the best interests of the church, they must have reached a height of angelical perfection, seldom if ever attained in this mortal state. But if, as the same writer is pleased to admit, "the ministers of the Secession were men of worth and principle,"‡ neither resentment of injuries and indignities, however great, nor that mean ambition and contemptible vanity which characterize "the popular demagogue," was the motive, *certainly not the leading motive, or chief spring, of their conduct*, in stating and maintaining a secession from the judicatories of the Church of Scotland. "Worth and principle," would have subdued the workings of resentment, and repressed the suggestions of ambition and vanity. But convinced as they were, after repeated and calm investigation, mutual conference, and earnest prayer for direction to the Father of lights, that to withdraw from the established judicatories was their incumbent duty, "worth and principle," induced them to "go forth unto Jesus without the camp, bearing his reproach." Actuated by pure and honourable views, they chose rather to sacrifice strong prepossessions in favour of a mother-church, to forego the endearments of early friendship, to abandon comfortable benefices secured by the state, and to expose their reputation to torrents of obloquy, than to neglect what appeared to them an important and necessary service to the cause of God and truth.

When the Commission of Assembly passed sentence against the four Brethren in November, 1733, they solemnly protested, "that their office and relation to their people should be held as valid as if no such sentence had been passed." In conformity with this protest, Mr. Erskine continued to officiate, it appears,

* See Sir Henry Moncrieff's "Account of the Life and Writings of Dr. Erskine," particularly the Appendix, p. 444, &c.

† See a short refutation of his charge against the seceding brethren, of inconsistency with regard to the rights of the people, in a note on the Memoir of the Rev. Ralph Erskine, Ch. Monitor, Vol. iv. p. 715, &c.

‡ Account of Dr. Erskine, p. 97.

in his own parish church at Stirling till May, 1740. But on the first Sabbath after the sentence of deposition was pronounced by the Assembly at that date, he peaceably retired with the congregation to a convenient spot in the open air, where he conducted, as usual, the public services of the day. Satisfied with regard to the rectitude of his conduct, his people almost universally concurred with him in separation from the established judicatories. With all due speed, too, they built for him a very spacious meeting-house, which was numerously attended, not only by the inhabitants of Stirling, but by serious Christians from the surrounding towns and villages, to the distance of more than ten miles; and in which he continued to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, with delight and with success, whilst life and health were spared.

He considered it a most gratifying circumstance, that his venerable colleague, the Rev. Alexander Hamilton, during the short time he lived after the rise of the Secession, never ceased to show to him and the Associate Presbytery the warmest regard, and was accustomed to pray publicly for them. The general prosperity of the cause in which he had taken so deep an interest and acted so prominent a part, afforded to Mr. Erskine abundant matter of gratitude and joy. Beside the three brethren who associated with him at the first, he was soon joined by other four ministers of the established church, including his beloved brother Ralph. A number of promising candidates for the ministry, who had finished or nearly finished their academical course, were licensed to preach the gospel. The Rev. Mr. Wilson of Perth, that singularly pious and intelligent man, was prevailed with to undertake the tuition of students in divinity. Multitudes in various parts of the country, availed themselves of the relief which the Secession afforded from the yoke of patronage, and listened to the pure doctrines of the cross with every appearance of serious attention, and spiritual benefit. In most of the principal towns in the Lowlands of Scotland, as well as in several less populous places, congregations were formed, and supplied with evangelical and faithful pastors. Amongst others, a large community was collected in Glasgow, which gave a most harmonious call to the esteemed friend and son-in-law of Mr. Erskine, the Rev. James Fisher; who was consequently translated from Kinclaven to that city, and admitted October 8th, 1741.

The Associate Presbytery, prompted by the hope of uniting the friends of truth, having determined to revive the practice of public covenanting, this solemn service appears to have commenced at Stirling, December 28th, 1743. From the sermon preached by Mr. Erskine on that occasion, it is obvious that the measure received his cordial approbation. Human nature is prone to extremes. The sincerest admirers of the Fathers of the Secession will admit, that in some instances their zeal was carried to excess. There is reason to believe that Mr. Erskine lived to regret the strictness with which covenanting was incul-

cated by his Presbytery.* Nor are we to imagine that he and his brethren, though heartily attached to the doctrines of the Reformation, and to presbyterial government and discipline, at any time approved of every part of the public conduct of the original covenanters. Their private letters and public deeds give evidence, that, in their apprehension, "the civil constitution was too much blended with the affairs of Christ's kingdom; and that forcing people was not the way to make proselytes to Christ, the weapons of whose kingdom are not carnal, but spiritual."

When the Associate Presbytery had become a Synod consisting of three Presbyteries, and when the work of God seemed to prosper in their hand, a difference of sentiment most unhappily arose among them with regard to the true meaning of the religious clause in the Burgess oath, then required in several cities and towns of Scotland; and "so sharp was the contention" which ensued, that in April, 1747, an entire separation took place between the contending parties. It is right to state, that Mr. Erskine, as well as his brother Ralph, was one of them who considered the swearing of the Burgess oath as not at all inconsistent with the profession of a Seceder, and who, therefore, wished it to be made a matter of forbearance; and that, amidst the grief and vexation he felt on this mournful occasion, he exercised, in general, his usual meekness, combined with decision. As an individual, he published nothing on the subject, except a short tract consisting of sixteen pages, written with admirable temper. There is no pleasure, however, in alluding to the circumstances of that lamentable breach. The same Providence by which it was permitted, no doubt overruled it for wise and salutary purposes; and after the separation had lasted for more than seventy years, God was pleased to pour out the Spirit of peace and love on the ministers and members of the two great branches of the Secession, and to accomplish the happy reunion, consummated in September 8th, 1820. The United Associate Synod includes, at the present moment, nearly three hundred ministers, and has under its inspection a highly respectable proportion, if not of the most opulent, yet of the most intelligent, industrious, and virtuous part of the inhabitants of Scotland. Notwithstanding the divisions which have taken place among Seceders, and notwithstanding their other faults and imperfections, as societies and individuals, no well informed and candid person of any persuasion will refuse to admit, that the Secession has been rendered, in an eminent degree, subservient to the interests of religious liberty, evangelical truth, and vital godliness. In addition to the good which it is directly the means of achieving, it has been, without doubt, indirectly beneficial, to a considerable extent, in

* It is to be regretted, that our Biographer has asserted so important a change in the Author's sentiments, without giving the reader some *evidence* of it. Such fickleness ill accords with the discrimination and judgment of Mr. Erskine. He undoubtedly lamented his *imperfections* in the performance of covenanting, as well as other duties; but, the reader, on a careful examination of his writings, will have "reason to believe," that his attachment to the scriptural, but despised doctrine of public covenanting, continued unabated.—Ed.

checking the progress of defection, and in provoking to jealousy clergymen and others, that have chosen to remain within the pale of the national establishment. May the exalted Redeemer visit all the churches with the reviving influences of his Holy Spirit, and accelerate that blessed period, when every cause of division shall cease, when the truth and peace shall be ardently and universally loved, and all Christians delight to dwell together in unity, "that with one mind and one mouth they may glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Mr. Moncrieff of Abernethy, who succeeded Mr. Wilson of Perth, in the theological chair, having taken part with those who utterly condemned the religious clause in the Burgess oath, Mr. Erskine was appointed Professor of divinity by the Synod to which he adhered. The late Rev. William M'Ewen of Dundee, and John Brown of Haddington, commenced their theological studies under his tuition. But, how well qualified soever he was, in other respects, for this important charge, his increasing infirmities obliged him to resign it within little more than a twelvemonth after he had undertaken the office.

In a private as well as a public capacity, Mr. Erskine experienced great variety of lot. Having lost his first and highly valued partner on the 31st of August, 1720, he was united, after the lapse of more than three years, with Miss Mary Webster, the daughter, as himself records it in his Diary, "of that worthy champion for the truth and cause of Christ, Mr. James Webster." She lived with him till March 15th, 1751, when he became a widower a second time. His first wife was the mother of ten children, of whom three sons and a daughter died in childhood; and the other six, two sons and four daughters, reached maturity. His son Ebenezer died abroad in the flower of his age; but David survived till about the year 1800. Jean, his eldest daughter, married the Rev. James Fisher, latterly of Glasgow; and Alison, the youngest, was united to the Rev. James Scott of Gateshaw. Both of them were blessed with children; and in these two branches, at least their Father has still a numerous posterity. Mrs. Scott died most comfortably at Edinburgh, January 13th, 1814, at the great age of ninety-four years and a half. Her sister Anne gave her hand to Mr. James Jaffray, Stirling; and Margaret married Mr. James Wardlaw, Dunfermline; but both died in the prime of life, leaving no children. Mr. Erskine's second spouse had two sons and a daughter, who have long ago finished their earthly career. While this good man's heart was much affected by his domestic changes and trials, he derived consolation from the Rock of ages, and from the animating prospects presented by the gospel. When he received the intelligence of his brother's departure, he exclaimed with great emotion; "And is Ralph gone? He has twice got the start of me, he was first in Christ, and now he is first in glory." The death of his dear children, inflicted a deep wound on his affectionate spirit; particularly, the loss of his three boys, who were cut off in one year, viz. 1713; Henry in the eighth year of his

age, Alexander in the fifth, and Ralph in the second. His Diary contains some notices of his sorrows, hopes, and consolations on these trying occasions. Parents who have been visited with similar bereavements, will not read without interest the following extract.

Portmoak, Wednesday, July 1st, 1713.—"I have been sadly, sadly afflicted with the loss of another pleasant child; my dear Henry Erskine, my first-born, having died by the will of God, June 8, being about eight years of age.——He was a blooming pleasant child, and according to his age had an excellent capacity, and was profiting exceedingly in his learning, and knew many of the fundamentals of religion above many of his age. While he lay on his sick-bed, I frequently conversed with him about the affairs of his soul; and he gave me great satisfaction by expressing a desire of Christ, and a desire to be with him rather than with father and mother, and friends and relations here in this world. And that same day that he died, he frequently desired me to pray with him, and would frequently cry out, when he saw me; 'O! Father, Father, pray, pray, pray for me!'——The Lord was pleased to give me sweet liberty in prayer on his behalf. All these things I take as grounds of hope that my sweet Henry is now praising, and triumphing with Christ in glory."—"Upon the 20th day of June," he adds, "the Lord was pleased to take away from me another pleasant child, of about five years of age, his name Alexander. My affections were exceedingly knit to him, and I was comforting myself in having him, after his brother Henry's death. But it seems the Lord will not allow me to settle my affection on any thing here below.——The Lord make me content with his dispensations, and give me the sanctified use of these repeated breaches that he has made upon my poor family. I hope to be gathered unto Christ with my little ones, ere long. I have had a sore parting; but they and I, I hope, shall have a joyful meeting. They will welcome me to those mansions of glory above; and they and I, with all the ransomed on mount Zion, will join in an eternal hymn and hallelujah of praise unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. O to be ready, and meet for that inheritance," &c.

For many years, Mr. Erskine was blessed with excellent health, and enabled to discharge his ministerial duty at home and abroad with much activity. But when he approached the age of seventy, he had repeated attacks of trouble, and his bodily vigour gradually failed. His distemper quite unfitted him for the fatigues of travelling; and having become incapable of preaching regularly in his own pulpit, his place was occasionally supplied by his brethren, and by probationers. His people cheerfully consented to make an adequate provision for an assistant; and he had great comfort in his nephew, Mr. James Erskine, one of Ralph's sons, who being regularly called, was ordained his colleague and successor, on the 22d January, 1752. Notwithstanding this alleviation of his pastoral labours, his infirmities continued and increased, and at last the day of his death drew near. It was his happiness, however, to experience the most tender sympathy from

his daughters, his colleague, and other relatives, and from a wide circle of friends. What was incomparably better, he enjoyed the reviving presence of God. Under acute pain and protracted debility, he exemplified the power of that living faith, which he had often inculcated on others, and exhibited a noble pattern of devout resignation. After his affliction had almost completely confined him to bed, his people expressed an earnest desire once more to see and hear him; and in compliance with their solicitations, he went from his bed to his pulpit and delivered a short discourse from these cheering words, Job xix. 25: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." His last sermon was literally preached from his bed to a company assembled in his room; where he baptized a child, after discoursing on a text with which he had particularly wished to finish his ministry, viz. Psal. xlviii. 14: "This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." A letter which he wrote to his daughter, Mrs. Scott, breathes a tranquil, grateful, and submissive spirit. "The Lord," says he to her, "makes me to sing of mercy on this account, that my bed is made to ease me, and my couch to comfort me; nor am I, like poor Job, scared with dreams, or terrified with visions. Many times my meditations of Him are sweet in the silent watches of the night. Many, many times, the Lord says, 'I am the Lord thy God;' and then follows, 'O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my God.'" In conversing with those around him he often used language to this effect: "I have always found my times of severe affliction my best times. Many blasts I have endured through life, but I had this comfort under them—a good God, a good conscience, and a good cause." To several friends that made him a visit one afternoon, he expressed his assurance of future bliss in the following memorable words: "O sirs, my body is now become a very disagreeable habitation for my soul; but when my soul goes out of my body, it will as naturally fly into the bosom of Jesus, as a stone will fall to the centre." When one of his relatives began to comfort him thus, "I hope you get now and then a *blink* to bear up your spirit under your affliction," he promptly returned this spirited reply: "I know more of *words* than of *blinks*. 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' The covenant is my charter; and if it had not been for that blessed word, my hope and strength had perished from the Lord."

That night on which he finished his mortal career, Mrs. Fisher, having come from Glasgow to see her dying father, was sitting in the room where he lay, and engaged in reading. Awakening from a slumber, he said, "What book is that, my dear, you are reading?" "'Tis your sermon, father," she replied, "on that text, 'I am the Lord thy God.'" "O woman," said he, "that is the best sermon ever I preached." The discourse had proved very refreshing to his own soul, as well as to many of the hearers. A few minutes after that expression had fallen from his lips, he requested his daughter to bring the table and candle near the bed; and having shut his eyes, and laid his hand under his cheek, he quietly breathed out his soul into the hands of his Redeemer, on the 2d

of June, 1754. Had he lived twenty days longer, he would have finished the seventy-fourth year of his age; and had he been spared three months more, he would have completed the fifty-first of his ministry, having served Christ twenty-eight years at Portmoak, and nearly twenty-three at Stirling.

In conformity with his own request, he was interred in the middle of his meeting-house, in a spot opposite to the pulpit, where a large stone covers his grave. A Latin inscription simply states the time of his decease, the duration of his ministry, his pastoral fidelity, and his having expressed a wish that his mortal remains should be deposited in the church, that being dead, he might still confirm the doctrine which, when living, he had steadfastly maintained. It is as follows:

2. Junii 1754, ætat. 74, Dormiit in Jesu,
Reverendus Dominus Ebenezer Erskine,
officio pastorali, primo apud Portmoacenses 28,
dein apud Stirlinenses 23, fidelissimè functus
In æde hoc sepeliri voluit,
ut mortuus testimonium firmaret,
quod dum vivus, mordicus tenuit.

The accounts already given of the life, ministry and death, of this faithful servant of Christ, appear to supersede the necessity of an elaborate delineation of his Character. His piety was at once sincere and fervent. A personal Covenant, in which he solemnly takes hold of the promises, and dedicates himself to the Lord, was found among his papers.* His religion was not confined to the sanctuary, but appeared in the regularity and delight with which he performed the exercises of the family and the closet. He conversed frequently and intimately with God, and with his own heart. While he instructed and exhorted his children with great affection and alacrity, he gladly embraced opportunities of promoting the best interests of his domestic servants, and of labourers that were occasionally employed in his service. His pious benevolence also took a wider range, and extended its unwearied efforts to the people of his charge, to all the churches, to all mankind. He was singularly helpful, as well in private conference as in public ministrations, to those whose minds were anxious and perplexed with regard to their immortal welfare. Nor did he overlook the temporal necessities of others. Whilst he often recommended cases of indigence and distress to the generous attention of his hearers, his own example of liberal beneficence gave weight to his appeals. His gravity was tempered with the most engaging affability and cheerfulness; his zeal with candour, and true moderation. The correctness of his morals, as a Christian, was above suspicion; and his loyalty, as a citizen, was incontestably established. His enemies, indeed, stigmatized him as a troubler both of church and state; and struggled hard to prove him guilty of sedition, if not of treason. To these calum-

* See a copy of this Covenant in Gospel Truth, p. 45.

nious charges he refers in advertisements, or notes, accompanying at least the early editions of some of his sermons, as those on Amos ix. 11; Psal. ii. 6. In these vindications of his character, he justly appeals to the general tenour of his conduct, and to the decided proofs he had shown of his loyalty, in the hour of public alarm. In the year 1715, he "prayed for the honourable family of George I. under the very nose of the Pretender;" and many of his parishioners at Portmoak, owing to his influence, engaged to serve as volunteers, and kept garrison for a time in a castle. In 1745, too, some time after the commencement of the Secession, when another daring and unnatural rebellion assaulted the British throne, he discovered the same ardent attachment to the Protestant interest and the House of Hanover; and, by his counsels and example, was singularly active and successful, in stimulating the inhabitants of Stirling to defend their king and country, their privileges and liberties.* How could the most envenomed shafts of calumny injure a man distinguished by such sterling fidelity and worth? It is deserving of notice, that during that critical period, not even one Seceder was known to swerve from his allegiance to George II.

All the other excellencies of this great man were crowned by that amiable grace, unfeigned humility. Modest, unassuming, self-diffident, he felt sometimes ashamed to succeed his brethren in the pulpit. He made no high pretensions, or ambitious claims. Referring to the encomiums pronounced upon him by the people of Kinross, in their reasons for translation, he used the following words in his speech to the Presbytery; "I am conscious their character is so remote from the truth, that I blush it should have been read before you." His first publications, as we have seen, were in a manner extorted; and, in the prefaces to some of them, he makes ingenuous acknowledgments of their defects, both as to

* The following letter, which Mr. Erskine had the honour to receive from the Marquis of Lothian, will give the reader some idea of the estimation in which, during the rebellion, his loyalty and influence were held. We quote it *verbatim* from the original now before us.

"London, January 25th, 1745-6.

"Rev. Sir, Being informed that many of his Majesty's well-affected subjects, (with whom you have great interest,) zealous for the defence of our present happy government, and invaluable interest, now attacked by France, Spain, the Pope, and a Popish pretender, have offered to take arms and serve the King, upon condition of being allowed to choose their own officers; I therefore take the liberty to offer my Son, Lord Robert Kerr, who is ambitious to serve as their Colonel, if they do him and my family the honour to prefer him. It would not be decent for me to give his character, but am persuaded he would behave and act so as to gain their good opinion. I beg to obtain your forgiveness for this trouble, and to be esteemed, Sir,

Your most obedient,
and most humble Servant,

LOTHIAN.

"The Duke is soon to be with you, and it will be very proper that you address him, for which end my Son, if you desire, shall attend you."

To this letter Mr. Erskine returned an appropriate and respectful answer.

matter and style, and even with respect to the indications they might exhibit, of the corrupt bias remaining in his heart.

Yet, how moderate soever the estimate he formed of his own productions, he was entitled to no ordinary share of esteem as a Preacher and an Author. Endowed with powerful talents and superior gifts, he conscientiously devoted them to the service of the sanctuary. His sermons abounded with evangelical truth, closely brought home to the conscience and the heart. His diction was simple and nervous. His arrangements were generally natural; and though, agreeably to the prevailing practice of his day, his divisions of the subject were numerous, they were enriched with striking and instructive illustrations. He had the advantages of a manly and prepossessing countenance, an easy elocution, and an alluring address. His whole demeanour in the pulpit was characterized by a *singular dignity*, which made a strong impression on his hearers. The Rev. Adam Gibb, it is said, having asked a certain young preacher, some time after Mr. Erskine's death, whether he had ever heard him, and being answered in the negative, replied; "Well then, sir, you never heard the gospel in its majesty."

As an Author, his Sermons were almost the only productions that were exclusively his own. He prepared, indeed, as has been stated above, the first sketch of the answers to the Twelve Queries. "The Act anent the Doctrine of Grace," too, was the joint work of Mr. Erskine, and that able and excellent man, the Rev. Alexander Moncrieff. He concurred, also, with his brother Ralph and his son-in-law, Mr. Fisher, in composing the *Synod's Catechism*. Owing partly to the obloquy of his clerical accusers, and partly to the importunities of pious hearers, he gave to the world, at different times, a considerable number of discourses in small pamphlets. A few of these, with several sermons by Mr. Ralph, were early collected and published in London, in one volume, recommended by the Rev. Thomas Bradbury. About seven years after his death, Mr. Fisher published at Edinburgh, in four neat volumes, a complete collection of all the sermons he had printed during his life. An additional volume, containing sermons never before printed, was edited by his son, Mr. David Erskine. The contents of these five volumes have subsequently undergone numerous and large impressions, in a variety of forms.

It is not our intention to institute a critical inquiry into the merits of these printed sermons. That they have no pretensions to that elegance of language and refinement of taste, which constitute the chief recommendation of many fashionable volumes, is frankly admitted. Nor are we unwilling to allow, that a fastidious reader of the present age may be apt to feel some degree of disgust at the frequent and spirited allusions to various topics that were keenly discussed at the time when they were preached, unless he possess some previous acquaintance with those controversies, and be prepared to make reasonable and candid allowances for the liberties taken by the preacher. But, that these discourses are, on the whole, conducive, in a high degree, to the pur-

poses of spiritual edification, will not be readily questioned by the genuine friends of the gospel, and might be presumed, with some appearance of reason, from the extensive circulation which they have long had, and continue to have, amongst serious Christians in Britain, and other parts of the world. Though a certain clergyman of the Church of England, lately deceased, whose acquaintance with them was probably very superficial, has ventured to describe the discourses of the Erskines as "dry" and uninteresting; and though a Reverend Doctor of the Church of Scotland has been pleased, in a recent publication, to represent some of Ebenezer's as deficient "in argument and substance," and meriting only to be consigned to oblivion; the unfavourable judgments of these writers are more than overbalanced by the cordial and ample testimonies to their substantial excellence and undoubted utility, which have been spontaneously given by theologians of high reputation for learning, piety, and worth.

The Rev. Thomas Bradbury, a celebrated English dissenter, and author of Sermons on "the Mystery of Godliness," gives them the following character in his recommendatory preface: "In these Sermons, the reader will find a faithful adherence to the design of the gospel, a clear defence of those doctrines that are the pillar and ground of truth, a large compass of thought, and a happy flow of words, both judicious and familiar."—The esteem which the Rev. James Hervey expressed for Ebenezer Erskine's discourses, is well known. In the sixteenth Dialogue of his Theron and Aspasio, that pious and lively writer says, in a note:—"Were I to read in order to refine my taste, or improve my style, I would prefer Bishop Atterbury's Sermons, Dr. Bates' works, or Mr. Seed's discourses. But were I to read, with a single view to the edification of my heart in true faith, solid comfort, and evangelical holiness, I would have recourse to Mr. Erskine, and take his volumes for my guide, my companion, and my familiar friend."—Another clergyman of the Church of England, eminent for the strength of his intellect, and the extent of his learning, as well as for the ardour of his piety; namely, the Rev. Augustus Toplady, seems to have entertained an equally favourable opinion of Ebenezer's sermons with Mr. Hervey; and, far from esteeming them "dry," he feelingly acknowledges the spiritual refreshment they had been the means of imparting to his soul. Having mentioned them in a passage of his Diary, he says: "These sweet discourses were wonderfully blessed to my soul. Great was my rejoicing and triumph in Christ. The Lord was with me of a truth, and his gracious visitation revived my spirit." In another passage, Mr. Toplady has the following expressions: "The Lord was gracious to my soul this afternoon. The Spirit was my comforter; and Mr. Erskine's two sermons on the Rainbow of the Covenant were the channel through which that comfort was conveyed."—Besides, the late Rev. Archibald Hall of London, in his treatise on Faith, expresses his regard for this writer in the following terms: "It is with particular pleasure the author embraces the opportunity

of acknowledging his vast obligations to Mr. Erskine's sermons on the Assurance of Faith. He wishes the reader carefully to peruse this excellent performance, in order to direct and enlarge his views of this subject."—In fine, the sermons of both brothers, Ebenezer and Ralph, are mentioned in very respectful terms, by the late Dr. Williams in his *Preacher*, in a list of books on Theology, which he recommends to students and ministers; and by the venerable and candid Dr. John Erskine of Edinburgh, in a note that occurs in the first volume of his Sermons.

These warm and decisive eulogies, pronounced by distinguished individuals of various religious persuasions, are unquestionably worthy of attention. Is there not ground to hope, that the day is yet far distant, which shall consign to oblivion a series of discourses, that have been so highly approved by competent judges, and so abundantly blessed for promoting the best interests of men? That every reader may himself reap some spiritual benefit from these scriptural sermons, is the sincere desire of the writer,—who, though not unwilling to avow his veneration for the memory of the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, and his connexion with the church, of which, as an instrument in the hand of Christ, that excellent man was the founder, has attempted, in this biographical sketch, after diligently inquiring into the transactions to which it relates, to give a just and unvarnished statement of facts.

November 14*th*, 1825.

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PREFACE.

It would be great presumption to attempt any recommendation of the following discourses, when they have had, hitherto, their approbation in the judgment and experience of so many serious and well disposed Christians, both at home and abroad: nor will any such thing be expected from one to whom the worthy author stood so nearly related as I do.

His praise is already in the churches; and, though he be dead, he yet speaketh. His modesty did not permit him to leave any memoirs of his life, for public use. He was twenty-eight years minister at Portmoak in Fife, and twenty-three at Stirling.—He died in the seventy-fourth year of his age.

It is hoped that whoever shall, in a dependence upon the divine blessing, peruse the valuable treasure contained in this volume, will find many things, (as the renowned Mr. Hervey expresses it,) "to the edification of" their "hearts, in true faith, solid comfort, and evangelical holiness."—That this may be the case with multitudes, is the sincere desire of

JAMES FISHER.

Glasgow, *Feb.* 10, 1761.

PREFACE

TO THE FIRST SERMON.

It is very probable that this, and some other sermons, now designed for the public, had slept in perpetual silence among my other short-hand manuscripts, if a holy and wise providence, which overrules us in our designs and inclinations, had not, in a manner, forced me to yield to their publication, for my own necessary defence, when the earnest entreaty of some (dear to the Lord) could not prevail with me to fall in with any such proposal. The conduct of adorable providence, in this matter, has brought me under such a conviction of culpable obstinacy, in resisting their solicitations, that I sincerely resolve, through grace, not to be so shy in time coming; especially, if I find that these sermons, which are almost extorted from me, shall prove useful and edifying.

The affair, which gave occasion to the publication of these discourses, is briefly this:—

In May, 1725, Mr. A. A.,* a reverend brother, *with whom I have taken sweet counsel, and gone unto the house of God in company*, and whose name, if it were practicable, out of tenderness to him, I have all the inclination in the world to conceal, was pleased, in my absence, and without any provocation from me, that I know of, publicly to arraign me before the Commission of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, of having, at a sacrament in Strathmiglo, upon the Monday, *anno* 1714, preached against the brethren who had taken the abjuration oath, notwithstanding the act of Assembly recommending *mutual forbearance* on that head. The sermon he pointed at is that which immediately follows, being the first in order, on Rev. iii. 4. It was preached before a pretty numerous auditory; but I never heard of its being quarrelled by any, except that brother himself. What ground he had for carping at it, let the world judge. It is true, in the use of lamentation, I took notice of some who defiled themselves and the land by perjury, particularly in taking the abjuration oath, with a design to serve the Pretender's interest. But

* Mr. Alexander Anderson, minister at St. Andrew's.

that I spoke either of ministers taking or forbearing, is false in fact; and I do not believe he will get any of that numerous company who will adventure to say so upon oath. It is true, when I urged him with this, having taken occasion to talk with him in the beginning of July last, he alleged, that, though I did not speak directly of ministers who had taken the oath, yet the tendency of my discourse was to bring a reflection upon them. But, for my part, if the oath be a good thing, and if he took it with a good conscience, I cannot find any thing in all that sermon that could militate against him, there being nothing in it, so far as I know, but the pure and plain truths of God. But if the word of the Lord be against men, it is a plain evidence of a galled and uneasy conscience within; for a good conscience will never be wounded at plain scripture truth. But it is the natural fruit of the sword of the Spirit, when faithfully managed, to prick and wound the guilty conscience; and, where it does not meeken and humble the spirits of men, it so irritates their corruptions, that they turn about to rend those who wield it. An instance of which we have, Luke xx. 19: "And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people; for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them."

I know it will be alleged that I have altered and smoothed my sermon, and that my notes may not be the same with what I delivered *viva voce*. As to which I shall only say, that it is my practice to write all I have a mind to say in public. It is true, indeed, I do not pretend to such an exact memory, as that I can confine myself in the delivery, to every thing in my notes, without varying a word or phrase: but yet I use to be pretty exact that way, when I know such critical auditors as Mr. A. are before me. One of my own children, who I am sure would not adventure to alter a word, dictated the following sermon to an amanuensis, from my original notes; and that same copy goes to the press: I own I helped the grammar in some places, when I revised it. So that there is not a phrase or sentence altered, at which my accuser might take the least umbrage. And I do very well remember that some things were expressed softer in the delivery than they are in the notes which now are come abroad.

Mr. A. told me, that, if I published my sermons, I could not hinder him from printing the notes he took from my mouth. For my part, if he took every word I spoke at that time, I should be very easy; for (I desire to speak it not out of vain glory, but to the praise of him who makes the tongue of the stammerer to speak plainly,) that which I deliver in public, has, for ordinary, the advantage of my notes, both for closeness of connexion and accuracy of expression. But I very much doubt if Mr. A. be such a ready writer as to catch every word, or sentence either, when I speak.

As for the other sermons that Mr. A. arraigns, I design to let them come abroad in due time; and what he asserts concerning them may be

considered in a preface to each sermon apart.—I shall here subjoin a list of them, with their several texts, notifying what was affirmed concerning them.

1*st*, Upon John vi. 66: "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Concerning this sermon, it was affirmed that I preached such doctrine, as he, preaching after me, was obliged to contradict.

2*dly*, Upon Psal. cxxxviii. 6: "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off." In this, I was said to have arraigned the church of Scotland, in the matter of the oath.

3*dly*, Upon Titus iii. 8: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men." As to this, it was affirmed, that, by ambiguous expressions, I endeavoured to lead the people to think that assurance was of the essence of faith; and that it was the duty of every man to believe that Christ died for him.

4*thly*, Upon Luke ii. 28: "Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God." As to which, it was said that I preached unsound doctrine, or doctrine of an erroneous tendency.

5*thly*, Upon Psal. lxxxix. 16: "In thy righteousness shall they be exalted." It was represented that, in this sermon, I taught that believers are exalted above the law; that they are altogether innocent; and that God hath not any grudge in his heart against them.

Because it is charged upon us as an error, that we preach assurance to be of the essence of faith, therefore I design also to publish a sermon on that subject, from Heb. x. 22: "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." From which I hope it shall appear, that our principle upon that head is agreeable to the scriptures of truth, and the ancient and modern standard of doctrine in this church. And I hope that the following sermon, and the third of those above mentioned, shall be an effectual confutation of that calumny cast upon us, as if we discarded holiness and good works. And whereas, it may be alleged that this sermon was preached long ago, and that I have altered my way of thinking since that time, I here declare that what is taught in the said sermon, I own as my principle still.

It shall be my earnest prayer, that He, who, by his overruling hand, has brought forth these sermons to public view, beyond my design, may accompany them with his effectual blessing, to the edification of souls.

E. E.

October 5, 1725.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

GOD'S LITTLE REMNANT KEEPING THEIR GARMENTS CLEAN IN AN EVIL DAY.*

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.—REV. III. 4.

THE first six verses of this chapter contain an epistle sent by Jesus Christ to the church of Sardis. Where we have, first, the preface, and then the body of the epistle. In the body of the epistle we may notice these three things: 1. An accusation or charge, in the close of the first verse. 2. An exhortation to several duties, such as repentance, watchfulness, and the like, ver. 2, 3. 3. We have a commendation given to this church, in the words of my text, *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis*, &c. Where, more particularly, we have, 1*st*, The commendation itself, *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments.* 2*dly*, A reward, *They shall walk with me in white.* 3*dly*, The reason and ground of this, *For they are worthy.* *First*, I say, we have the commendation itself. Where we may notice, the commender, the commended, and the ground on which the commendation runs. 1. The commender. Who he is may be gathered from the connexion. It is "he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars," ver. 1. It is Christ himself. And his commendation may be depended upon; for he trieth the heart and reins, and needs not that any should testify of man unto him, because he knows what is in man. 2. The party commended. Who are described, (1.) From their designation; they are called *names.* God had "given them a new name, a name better than of sons and of daughters," even a name "among the living in Jerusalem:" they were marked among the rolls of his chosen, redeemed, and sanctified ones. By their zeal, uprightness, integrity, and their honest appearance for God, in that degenerate day and place, they had distinguished themselves from others, and so

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purchased a name to themselves; and they were known to men as well as unto God: "The Lord knoweth the righteous;" and he knows them by name, they are marked out among others. (2.) They are described by their paucity; they are a few names. They were comparatively few, when laid in the balance with the multitude and bulk of carnal secure professors in this church; there was but a small part of them that had kept themselves free of the corruptions and defections of that church, and that had "not bowed the knee unto Baal." (3.) They are described from the place of their residence, *Sardis*, one of the seven churches of the Lesser Asia. The expression here is observable, *A few names even in* Sardis. Christ's character of this church, in the close of the first verse, was, that they were generally dead, though they had a name to live: "But," as if he had said, "though the generality of this church be dead, yet even there I have a few lively and tender Christians." But then, 3. Notice the ground on which the commendation runs; they have kept their garments clean, or, *have not defiled their garments.* Perhaps there may be an allusion in this expression to the Jews, who were not to come near any thing that was unclean, by the law of Moses, or to touch them with their garments, lest they should be defiled: or it may allude to the practice of the eastern countries, who used to gird up their long garments, to keep them from being defiled, or spotted. The meaning is, that this little remnant in Sardis had maintained their integrity, like Job; they were "perfect and upright men," men that "feared God, and eschewed evil;" they had not complied with the abounding errors and corruptions of their day, but "exercised themselves to keep consciences void of offence towards God and man." When others were sleeping, they were waking, about their work; when others in that church were dead and secure, they were lively. And so much for the commendation given by Christ to this remnant. *Secondly*, In the words we have a reward, or rather we may call it a consolatory promise made to this little remnant: *They shall walk with me in white.* Perhaps the expression may allude to the practice of the Romans, who clothed their nobility, at any solemnity, in white: or to their conquerors, who triumphed, upon any victory obtained, in white garments; or to the priests under the law, who ministered in the temple in white garments. The meaning is, *They shall walk with me in white;* that is, "They shall be admitted to the immediate enjoyment of fellowship and communion with me, and be partakers of my glory in heaven through eternity." But the import of the expression may be more fully spoken to afterward. *Thirdly*, In the words we have the reason and ground why the Lord

puts such a difference between his remnant and others, *For they are worthy;* that is, valuable, and excellent persons, as Solomon speaks, "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." Not as if they had any worthiness or excellency in themselves beyond others by nature; no, no; "They are children of wrath and condemnation, even as others;" but they are made worthy by justifying and sanctifying grace, by imputed righteousness and inherent holiness. Some render the word, "For they are meet:" so the word is rendered, Matth. iii. 8: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." So here the Lord promises, that they who keep their garments clean *should walk with him in white;* why, because it is meet or suitable it should be so, that they who are holy here, should be happy hereafter.

Doct. "That although there be but few in a visible church that keep their garments clean in a declining time, yet these few are highly valued by Christ, and shall be admitted to partake of his glory in heaven."

This doctrine I take to be the scope of the verse, *Thou hast a few names*, &c. In discoursing on this point, I shall endeavour, through divine assistance, to do these six things:—

I. Offer a few propositions concerning this little remnant.

II. Show that Christ has a high value for this remnant; they are worthy in his esteem.

III. What is imported in their keeping their garments clean.

IV. What it is to walk with Christ in white.

V. Inquire into the connexion between the duty and privilege.

VI. Apply the whole.

I. The *first* thing is, to offer a few propositions concerning this remnant, who are said to *keep their garments clean;* and you may take these few following.

1. That God the Father gave a remnant to Christ of the posterity of Adam, in the covenant of redemption, to be ransomed and redeemed by him, from that wo and wrath, into which Adam, by his apostacy, had involved himself and all his posterity. That such a remnant was gifted to Christ by the Father, is plain from John xvii.; where Christ in his prayer frequently speaks of those that the Father gave him, particularly ver. 6: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." He promised to him, for his encouragement in that great undertaking, that he should have "a seed to serve him," and "see of the travail of his soul."

2. The Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, in the fulness of time, took on the nature of man, and in our nature obeyed

the law, and died in the room and stead of this remnant which the Father gave him. He did not obey the law, and satisfy justice for the whole world, or for all men, as Arminians talk; no; but he died for a select number. Hence he is said to "lay down his life for his sheep," and not for the goats. And as his death, so his intercession is confined to this remnant, as is plain from John xvii. 9: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine."

3. This redeemed remnant are, in God's own time, sooner or later, under the ministry of gospel-ordinances, determined, by the power and efficacy of divine grace, to close with Christ, upon the call of the gospel, and to go in to the blessed contrivance of salvation and redemption through him: he translates them, in a day of his power, "out of darkness into his marvellous light, and into the kingdom of his dear Son." Not one of this elected remnant, but shall in due time be brought home; for "whom he did predestinate, them he also called."

4. God's remnant are a holy people. They are a set of men that study to keep clean garments; they study to "purify themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord;" and therefore called "the people of his holiness," Is. lxiii. 18. Holiness is the design of their election; for "he hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." Holiness is the design of their redemption by Christ Jesus: "He hath redeemed us from all iniquity, and purified unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14. Holiness is the design of their effectual calling: "For God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness; and he hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling." So that, I say, God's remnant are a holy remnant.

5. The number of this remnant is but small; there are but a *few names in Sardis, that have not defiled their garments.* Christ's flock is but a *little flock.* It is indeed a great flock, and an "innumerable multitude," abstractly considered: but considered comparatively, or when laid in the balance with the droves and multitudes of the wicked, it is but a little flock, and a small remnant. They are few that are elected; "for many are called, but few are chosen;" they are few that are redeemed;" it is only God's elect that are "bought with a price:" they are few that are effectually called; for "to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" few that hold out in the time of temptation; but *seven thousand* among all the thousands of Israel "that have not bowed the knee to Baal."

6. Although they be but few, yet in the worst of times God has always some of this remnant, who cleave to him and his

way, even when all about them are corrupting their ways. He had a Lot in Sodom, whose righteous soul was vexed with the abominations of the place; he has a remnant of mourners in Jerusalem, when the whole city was defiled with wickedness; he has his *two witnesses* to bear testimony to his truths, when "the whole world is wondering after the beast," and over-run with Antichristian darkness and idolatry.

7. *Lastly*, God has a special eye of favour and kindness on this remnant, in a sinful and declining time. He has "a mark set upon the men that sigh and cry for the abominations in Jerusalem;" his "eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him," &c. But this leads me to,

II. The *second* thing proposed, which was to show, *that Christ has a high value for this remnant.* They are the worthies of the world in his esteem, however they be disesteemed and undervalued by the world. This will appear from these following considerations:—

1. Consider what an account he makes of them, when compared with the rest of the world. He values them so highly, that he will give whole nations and kingdoms of the wicked for their ransom: Isa. xliii. 4: "Ever since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee; and I gave men for thee," &c.; that is, he will sacrifice whole nations and kingdoms of wicked men, before he be bereft of his little remnant. The scriptures are very full to this purpose. His remnant is the gold, the rest of the world are but dross: "Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross," Psal. cxix. 119: but "the precious sons of Zion are comparable to fine gold," Lam. iv. 2; not only gold, but fine gold, polished by the hand of the Spirit. Again, his little remnant is the wheat, but the rest of the world are the chaff; and "What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?" When he "comes with his fan in his hand, he will gather his wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn up with fire that is unquenchable," Matth. iii. 12. His little remnant is the good corn, but the wicked are the tares; and he will say to his reapers at the last judgment, "Gather the tares together, and bind them in bundles to burn them;" but, "Gather the good corn into my barn." His remnant are his sheep, but the rest are the goats; and he will say to the sheep on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed;" but to the goats he will say, "Depart, ye cursed." His remnant are his vessels of honour, whom he sets by as plenishing to garnish "the house not made with hands;" but the wicked are vessels of wrath, whom he "will break in pieces as a potter's vessel," and cast into the furnace of his anger. Thus, I say, that they are worthy in

his esteem, is evident from the account he makes of them, when laid in the balance with others.

2. That this little remnant are worthy on Christ's account, will appear, if we consider the names and compellations that he gives them. He sometimes calls them his *love*, his *dove*, his *undefiled*, his *Hephzibah*, his *Beulah*, his *Jedidiahs*, the very darlings of his heart. He calls them sometimes his *jewels:* Mal. iii. 17: "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day that I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." He calls them the very *apple of his eye*, the most tender part of the body: and the eyelid of his special providence doth cover them. Yes, such is the value that he has for them, that he calls them *himself*, and speaks of them as if he and they were but one: "Saul, Saul," says the Lord, "why persecutest thou me?"

3. Consider the endeared relations they stand under to him; and from thence you will see, that they cannot but be worthy in his esteem. There is a legal, a moral, and a mystical union between him and them. He is their Head, and they are his members; he is the Root, and they are the branches that grow upon him; he is the Husband, and they are his spouse and bride; "Thy Maker is thy husband;" he is their Father, and they are his children; he is their Elder Brother, and they are his younger brethren; he is Heir of all things, and he makes them joint-heirs with himself of his heavenly kingdom; he is their Advocate, and they are his clients; he is their King, and they are his subjects.

4. They cannot but be worthy in his esteem, if you consider how much he values not only their persons, but whatever pertains to them. He values their names; *I have a few names in Sardis*; he keeps them among the records of heaven, and has them written in the Lamb's book of life." He values their prayers: Cant. ii. 14: "O, my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, let me hear thy voice; for it is sweet." The prayers of the wicked are like the howling of dogs to him; but the prayers of the upright remnant are his delight. He values their tears, and "puts them into his bottle;" he, as it were, gathers every drop from their eyes: "I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears," saith the Lord to Hezekiah. He values their blood: Psal. cxvi. 15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints:" and they that shed their blood, "he will give them blood to drink."

5. *Lastly*, That they are worthy in his esteem, appears from what he does for them. He remembered them in their low estate, and set his love on them when they were wallowing in their blood. He has loved them "with an everlasting love," an unalterable love, with an ardent love; his love to

them "is strong as death: he has redeemed them with his blood; for we are not redeemed by corruptible things, such as silver and gold," &c. "He hath loved us and washed us with his own blood," Rev. i. 5. He confers many excellent privileges upon them. They have an excellent pardon, it being full, final and irrevocable, Heb. viii. 12. They have an excellent "peace, which passes all understanding;" an excellent joy, being "unspeakable, and full of glory;" excellent food; they "eat of the hidden manna;" have access to an excellent throne, "with boldness," Heb. iv. 16. They have excellent communion, even "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." They have the interposition of an excellent Mediator, even Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. They have an excellent guard attending them; they are guarded with the divine attributes, even "as the mountains are about Jerusalem;" guarded with the "twenty thousand chariots of angels," Mahanaim, "the two hosts of God." They have an excellent store-house, even the "whole fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in Christ. They are clothed with excellent robes, even "the garments of salvation, and robes of righteousness." They are "heirs of an everlasting inheritance, that is incorruptible and undefiled; yea, heirs with God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." And, to crown all, they have excellent security for all this; the word of God, his covenant, his oath, his blood, and the earnest of his Spirit. From all which it appears, what a high value he has for them, and how worthy they are in his account and reckoning.

III. The *third* thing proposed was, to *inquire into what is imported in the remnant keeping their garments clean.* And,

1. It imports, that God's remnant are clothed, or, that they have garments given them: they are not naked, like the rest of the world. And there is a two-fold garment with which God's remnant are arrayed; namely, a garment of imputed righteousness, and a garment of inherent holiness. By the first, all their iniquities are covered, and they screened from the curse and condemnation of the law, and the stroke of avenging justice. By the last, namely, the garment of inherent holiness, their souls are beautified and adorned, the image of God restored, and they, like "the King's daughter," made "all glorious within." And it is the last of these that is here principally intended.

2. It imports, that the garment which God gives his remnant is a pure and a cleanly robe; and therefore called *white raiment*, Rev. iii. 18; and *fine linen*, chap. xix. 8. Speaking of the bride, *the Lamb's wife*, it is said, that "to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, pure and

white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." So that you see *white* is the livery with which Christ clothes his little remnant: and, Rev. vii. 9, they are said to be "clothed with white robes."

3. That sin is of a defiling and polluting nature. As mire and filth defile our garments, so does sin defile and pollute our souls, and render us vile and loathsome in the sight of God. Hence it is commonly called *uncleanness*; Zech. xiii. 1: "There is a fountain opened to the house of David, to take away sin and uncleanness." It is the abominable thing which God's soul doth hate, and is more loathsome in his sight, than the most detestable things in nature are to us.

4. That it may be the lot of the Lord's people to live and walk among a people, the generality of whom are polluting and defiling themselves; for this is the commendation of the remnant here, that though the body of this church was corrupted, yet they had not gone along with them. Thus it fared with Noah in the old world, and with Lot in Sodom; and the prophet Isaiah, (chap vi.) cries out, "I dwell in the midst of a people of polluted lips."

5. That even God's remnant are not without danger of defiling themselves with the sins and defections of their day. Sin comes gilded with such fair and plausible pretences, and backed with such powerful motives and arguments, that even some of God's own remnant are not only in danger, but some of them may be actually insnared and defiled therewith; and, no doubt, some that had the root of the matter in Sardis, were tainted with the corruptions of that church; as I doubt not but many in our own church, who have made very wide steps, are, notwithstanding, dear and near to God.

6. That foul garments are very unbecoming and unsuitable to God's remnant; for they that "name the name of Christ," and profess to be his friends and favourers, are bound to "depart from all iniquity." It brings up a reproach on religion, and makes "the name of God to be blasphemed," when any of God's remnant make a wrong step; as you see in the case of David: his murder and adultery opened the mouths of the wicked in his day, and made "the enemy to blaspheme." And I am sure it cannot but be bitter to any that belong to God, when, through their untenderness, "the way of God is evil spoken of."

7. A careful study of universal obedience to all known and commanded duties. God's remnant are of David's mind and principle; they "have a respect to all God's commandments;" his law is the rule and standard of their walk; it is a "light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their paths:" and they are always breathing after more and more conformity to it, say-

ing, with David, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" They study to have a gospel-adorning conversation, and that "their light may so shine before men, that others, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father which is in heaven."

8. A holy caution and tenderness in guarding against all sin, especially the prevailing sins of the day and generation in which they live. They will not "walk according to the course of this world, but they are transformed by the renewing of their minds;" they keep at a distance from common defections, errors in doctrine, profanity in practice, and innovations in the worship of God; they will not so much as give their consent to these abominations; but endeavour, in their station, to oppose them, and give their honest testimony against them. *Keeping of the garments clean*, in a declining time, implies a steady adherence to the truths, laws, and ordinances, of Christ, and the government that he has appointed in his house. Hence they are said to "keep the word of his patience." They will not sell one hoof of divine truth, no, not though it should cost them the warmest blood of their heart; they will "buy the truth" at any rate, but sell it at no rate. It implies, that they have supplies of covenanted strength given them, to uphold and keep them from defiling their garments: for they are not able to keep themselves; no, "The way of man is not in himself;" it is "the Lord that keepeth the feet of his saints," when "the wicked shall be silent in darkness;" yea, they "are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation," 1 Pet. i. 5: which implies, a keeping them as in a garrison: "The Lord Jehovah is their strength," and the munitions of rocks round about them.

9. *Lastly*, It imports the mortification of sin in the root and fruit of it, together with a holy care to have grace improved and exercised, till it be crowned with glory; for "he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself," &c. And thus you see what is imported in keeping of the garments clean.

IV. The *fourth* thing proposed, was, to *inquire a little into the import of the consolatory promise made to the remnant that keep their garments clean; They shall walk with me in white*, saith the Lord: that is, as I told you in the explication of the words, "they shall be admitted to share of my glory at death and judgment." But I shall endeavour more particularly to inquire into the import of this promise. And, 1. What is imported in walking with Christ? And, 2. What in walking with him in white?

First, What is imported in walking with him?

1. It necessarily supposes the soul's subsistence in a separate state, or after its separation from the body; otherwise it could

not be said to *walk with him.* This is one of the fundamental truths of our religion, which Christ himself proved and maintained against the Sadducees, from that scripture, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; God is not," says he, "the God of the dead, but of the living." No sooner are the souls of God's remnant divorced from their bodies, but, by the ministry of angels, they are carried into Abraham's bosom.

2. Their walking with Christ, not only supposes the soul's existence in a separate state, but also its activity, for it *walks* with Christ. The spirits of just men, upon their separation from the body, are made perfect, and so perfect, "as they serve him day and night in his holy temple," with infinitely more activity and liveliness, than when they were cooped up in the prison of the body; which, in this state of sin and imperfection, is a dead weight, as it were, upon the soul, in the service of God.

3. Their walking with Christ implies perfect peace and agreement between Christ and them: for how can two walk together, except they be agreed? The Lord's people, while here, are many times under the affrighting apprehensions of his anger and displeasure, which makes them cry out with David, (Psal. lxxvii. 9,) "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah." But there will be no such complaint in heaven: no, no; there will not be the least grudge in his heart, or frown in his countenance, through eternity; nothing but a perpetual smile of his reconciled countenance.

4. It implies intimacy: which is more than agreement; for there may be a good understanding where there is little intimacy and familiarity. But the saints in glory shall *walk with Christ;* that is, he and they will be very intimate one with another. This intimacy is begun on earth; for sometimes, even in the wilderness, he brings them into the chamber of presence, and allows them sweet fellowship with himself; sometimes they "sit down under his shadow with great delight." But this intimate fellowship shall be consummated and completed in heaven, where all vails shall be rent, and all clouds shall be for ever dispelled, and nothing shall remain to interrupt the blessed familiarity betwixt him and them: then that word shall be fully accomplished, John xvii. 23: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

5. It implies, that they shall be in the presence of Christ: and this is an addition to intimacy; for two intimate friends may be at a distance one from another. The Lord's people, while "in the body," are said to be "absent from the Lord." But then they shall be at home; he and they shall dwell together through eternity, in the mansions of glory, the "house

not made with hands." So much Christ tells his disciples, John xii. 26: "Where I am, there shall also my servants be." And, John xiv. 3: "I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

6. It implies, that they shall be privileged with the sight of Christ; for two cannot well walk together without seeing one another. Then they shall see the man Christ "exalted at his Father's right hand, far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." This is a privilege ensured to the little remnant by Christ's own prayer, John xvii. 24: "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." O how ravishing a sight will this be, to behold the glory of Christ in heaven! When he was transfigured upon mount Tabor, "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light:" what will he be on Mount Zion above, when he shall be seen with all his robes of glory, and all his heavenly retinue attending him?

7. *They shall walk with me.* It implies, full pleasure, satisfaction, and complacency: for walking is an act of recreation. Heaven is a place of joy and pleasure, Psal. xvi. 11: "In thy presence there is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Then the joy of the Lord shall not only enter into them, but they shall "enter into the joy of their Lord:" "The ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads."

Secondly, What is imported in walking with him *in white?*

Ans. 1. That then all their black and beggarly garments shall be laid aside. A "body of sin and death" shall not then molest them; they shall not any more complain of the errors of their hearts, or the iniquity of their heels: no, they shall be "presented without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

2. White is a badge of purity and innocence: *They shall walk with me in white;* that is, they shall not only lay aside their beggarly garments, but they shall be "clothed with change of raiment." Perfect holiness shall then be their ornament: "They shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work;" and, like the King's daughter, "they shall be all-glorious within:" they who had "lain among the pots, shall become like the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold;" yea, "they shall shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

3. White is a badge of victory, as we told you in the explication of the words, Rev. vii. 9; the triumphant company there, "of all nations, tongues, and kindreds, stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and

palms in their hands," as a sign of their complete victory over all their enemies, whether outward or inward. Sin is an enemy that the believer has many a hot conflict with, while here; but in heaven, "the inhabitants are all forgiven their iniquities;" there is no more sin, Rev. xxii. As for Satan, that grand enemy, that went about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour them, they shall then tread him under their feet: "Know ye not that the saints shall judge angels?" saith the apostle. And as for the world, they shall never any more be insnared either with its frowns or flatteries.

4. White is a badge of honour. The Romans clothed their nobility in white, as you heard. O what honour is reserved for the saints of God, his little remnant! They shall be honoured with a place among them that stand by in the new Jerusalem; yea, they shall be honoured with the *white stone* and the *new name;* they shall sit with Christ upon his throne, Rev. iii. 21. They shall be honoured with a crown of burnished glory: "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, we shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away." They shall be honoured with a kingdom: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." They shall be honoured to be assessors with Christ at the last judgment: "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" they will applaud the Judge in all his proceedings, and cry, "True and righteous are thy judgments, Lord God Almighty;" then that passage will be fully accomplished, Psal. cxlix. 5—9: "Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written. This honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord."

5. White was a garment appointed for the priests under the law, when they were to minister about holy things. The saints of God are all priests, Rev. i. 5, 6: "Unto him that loved us, and hath made us kings and priests unto God." And as priests in the heavenly temple, their continual work shall be, to offer up eternal sacrifices of praise to God and the Lamb. There every bird in every bush shall sing, and say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us unto God by his blood. Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

6. We find the angels frequently appearing in white. Acts i. 10; while the disciples are looking towards heaven after their exalted Lord, "behold two men," that is, two angels in the form of men, "stood by them in white apparel." So the

saints *shall walk with Christ in white;* they shall be like the angels of heaven: Matth. xxii. 30: "In the resurrection, they are as the angels of God in heaven." The original word signifies, they shall be *equal to angels*, or *angels' mates*. Like angels, they shall not be liable to hunger, thirst, weariness, or such bodily infirmities. The angels are said to "behold the face of God in heaven;" so shall ye who are God's little remnant: "Now ye see darkly, as through a glass; but then ye shall see face to face." The angels serve God with the greatest voluntariness and freedom, with the greatest activity and nimbleness; for "he maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire;" so shall the saints in glory; they shall do the will of God, as it is done by the angels in heaven.

7. We find Christ sometimes appearing in white, particularly at his transfiguration: "His countenance did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." And so it may import this much, they *shall walk with me in white;* that is, there shall be a blessed conformity between them and me in glory. Rev. xix. 11, 14. Christ is there represented as mounted upon "a white horse," and the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, "clothed in fine linen, white and clean." Christ, and all his redeemed company, shall be clothed with the same livery: 1 John iii. 2: "When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Their souls shall resemble him in righteousness and true holiness; yea, "their vile bodies shall be made like unto his glorious body."

8. *Lastly*, White has a great reflection of light with it when the sun shines upon it. O how bright and dazzling will the glory of the saints be in that day, when the Sun of righteousness shall shine upon them with a meridian splendour! Christ will then "be admired in his saints;" for they shall "shine forth like the sun, and like the brightness of the firmament:" "the beauty of the Lord their God will then be upon them;" and such beauty as shall eternally astonish and confound the wicked, who contemned them upon earth, and did not reckon them worthy to sit with the dogs of their flock." And this much for the fourth thing.

V. The *fifth* thing was, to *inquire into the connexion between the duty and the privilege, between keeping the garments clean, and walking with Christ in white.*

1. Then, negatively, you would know, that there is no connexion of merit, as if our *keeping of clean garments* did deserve that we should *walk with Christ in white:* no, no; let "every mouth be stopped; for all the world is guilty before God;" and therefore can merit nothing but wrath and vengeance at the hand of God. "By the works of the law shall no flesh

living be justified," or saved; it is by the merits of Christ, his doing and dying, as the surety of the little remnant, that they are brought *to walk with him in white.* But though there be no connexion of merit, yet,

2. And positively, there is, 1*st*, A connexion of decree or purpose in this matter. God, by an unalterable decree, has ordained, that they who are holy shall be happy; that *they who keep their garments clean shall walk with him in white.* 2 Thess. ii. 13: "God hath from the beginning chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." 2*dly*, There is a connexion of promise, as well as of purpose. You have them linked together in this promise in the text, and every where almost through the scriptures of truth. You have a cluster of these promises in the second and third of the Revelation: "To him that overcometh," which is the same thing with keeping the garments clean, "will I give to eat of the hidden manna." And this link is so strong, that it can never be broken; for it is one of these "immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie." 3*dly*, There is a connexion of meetness or congruity. It is suitable, that these who are holy should be happy; that they who have white garments here, should be clothed with white hereafter. It is suitable to the nature of God; for he "cannot behold iniquity, neither can evil dwell with him:" none but holy ones shall enjoy a holy God. It is suitable to the work of heaven; for "no unclean thing can enter the gates of the new Jerusalem;" to this purpose is the last clause of our text, *They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy*, or *meet*, as the word may be rendered, Col. i. 12: "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." 4*thly*, There is a connexion of evidence. Holiness, or clean garments, is an evidence of the soul's title or claim to glory; for "whom he sanctified, them he also glorified." "Who is the man that shall ascend into the hill of God? and who shall stand in his holy place?" The answer is, "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart," Psal. xxiv. 3, 4. 5*thly*, There is a connexion of legacy. Christ, by his latter will, has ensured the kingdom to his little remnant that keep their garments clean: Luke xxii. 28, 29: "Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me."

VI. The *sixth* thing is the application. And the first use shall be of information, in these particulars.

1. See hence, holiness is to be studied and pursued, however it may be ridiculed and mocked at by a profane world; for it is they that *do not defile their garments* that *shall walk*

with Christ in white. The blind world is ready to imagine, that the way to heaven is not so strait and narrow as ministers call it; that there needs not be so much ado, and all is but a piece of needless nicety, preciseness, and the like. But remember, that strict holiness will carry the day at the long-run; and you that are for a lax religion, and a broad way to heaven, will at length land in hell, unless mercy and repentance prevent. "Walk circumspectly," therefore, "not as fools, but as wise," &c.

2. See from this doctrine, that they labour under a damnable mistake, who think or say, that it is a vain or unprofitable thing to serve the Lord, and to keep his way; for they that *walk with Christ* here, shall partake of his glory hereafter: "Godliness," saith the apostle, "is great gain, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Religion carries a reward in its bosom, beside the reward that is prepared for the saints in the life to come. "In keeping of thy commandments," says David, "there is a great reward.—O how great is the goodness thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!" &c. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," 1 Cor. ii. 9.

3. We may see, that gospel-purity and holiness is not such a common thing as the world apprehend; for there are but *a few names*, few persons that are helped to *keep their garments clean.* My friends, beware of taking every thing for holiness that has the shadow and appearance of it." Some are ready to think, that their garments are clean enough, if they keep free of gross scandalous outbreakings, such as lying, swearing, stealing, uncleanness, and the like; but the proud Pharisee came this length, who said, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men; I am no extortioner, adulterer, or injurious person," &c. Some think their garments clean, if they be moral in their walk, just in their dealings between man and man. I wish, indeed, there were more morality among these that profess the name of Christ. But, O sirs, mere morality, in the highest degree now attainable, comes infinitely short of the nature of true holiness; it is quite another thing: and to put morality in the room of gospel-holiness, is in effect to renounce Christ and the covenant of grace, and to run back to Adam's covenant for life and salvation. Some think their garments clean enough, because of some personal reformation that they have made in their outward walk; they have left off lying, swearing, drunkenness, uncleanness, and the like. But this will not amount to true holiness. Herod reformed his life, and did many things through the ministry of John the Baptist, and yet beheaded him at last. Some reckon

upon their diligence in the outward duties of religion: they read, hear, pray, communicate, and run the round of outward performances, and thereupon conclude, that they are holy persons. But who more diligent in the externals of religion than the Pharisees, who "fasted twice a week, and gave tithes of all that they possessed?" and yet Christ tells us, that "except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." So that, I say, gospel-holiness is no common thing.

4. See hence, that the division of mankind, and particularly of these that live in the visible church, between Christ and the devil, is very unequal as to the number; for the greatest part even of the visible church, go to the devil's share, for there are *but a few names in Sardis that do not defile their garments.* Christ's flock is a *little flock:* "I will take them one of a city, and two of a family," or tribe, "and bring them to Zion." It is true, they will be a great company, and make a goodly appearance, when they shall be gathered by the angels from the four winds of heaven; but yet they are only like the gleanings after the vintage, in comparison of the vast multitudes of mankind that run in the broad way to destruction.

5. See hence what it is that sweetens the pale countenance of the king of terrors to believers; it is this, they see that upon the back of death, they will be admitted to *walk with Christ in white.* This made the apostle to long so vehemently for his dissolution, saying, "I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ." Faith's views and prospect of this makes the believer to triumph over death, as a vanquished and slain enemy, saying, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

6. See hence what they may expect upon the back of death, who habitually wallow in the puddle of sin. It is only they that have *clean garments*, that *shall walk with Christ* in glory; and therefore it inevitably follows, that the gates of glory shall be shut upon you: Rev. xxi. 27: "There shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." And ver. 8: "The fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." O sirs! you that live and die in this condition, with the guilt and filth of sin and lying on your consciences, you will find a sting in death which will stick in your souls through eternity: for it is only God's little remnant, "whose garments are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb," that shall triumph with him in glory; while

you that wallow in sin now, shall be found weltering in the flames of Tophet.

7. See hence, that honesty is the best policy in a declining time; for it is only the honest-hearted remnant that shall walk with Christ above. Keep God's ways, sirs, whatever come; and beware of sinful shifts to shun the cross: "They that walk uprightly shall walk surely;" whereas, they who think to shun danger by shifting duty, really run themselves into greater danger and inconveniencies, than those which they imagined to avoid.

Use 2*d*, may be of *lamentation*, that there are so many foul garments among us at this day. Alas! sirs, may we not say, that there are but *a few names* in Scotland, that have not defiled their garments with the corruptions and pollutions of the time? All ranks have corrupted their ways, magistrates, ministers, and people. May not the character which God gave of Israel of old, be too justly applied to us, Is. i. 4: that we are "a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters, who have provoked the holy One of Israel unto anger, and are gone away backward?" I cannot now stand to show wherein we have defiled our garments. Has not the land been defiled with the blood of many of the saints of God under the late reigns, from which it is not as yet purged? Is not the whole land defiled with breach of solemn national engagements, while these solemn covenants have been scandalously burnt in the capital city of the nation, and that by the countenance and command of authority? And are there not many at this day amongst us, who profess to be of the communion of the church of Scotland, that renounce and disown the obligation of these solemn ties? Are not many defiling their garments with Arminian and Socinian heresies? others with a superstitious worship, which, to the reproach of our holy religion, is tolerated among us by law? Have not many defiled their garments in our land, with a customary swearing by the name of God? others by juggling with God in the matter of solemn oaths, abjuring a Popish Pretender, with a design to put themselves in a better capacity to do him service, and promote his interest? Others have, even in this province, lately defiled their garments, by putting their hands to scandalous libels, by way of address to the sovereign: in which they represent ministers as rebels against authority, for appointing fasts, and preaching against the sins of the time, and for giving warning to people of the tokens of God's anger that are visible among us. And, alas! may we not all lament, that we have defiled our garments, by the breach of sacramental and sick-bed vows? But I must not stand on these things.

Use 3*d*, is of *trial* and *examination*. Try, sirs, whether you be among God's little remnant, that are keeping their garments clean, when all round about you are defiling themselves. And, for your trial, I offer you the few following marks of God's remnant:—

1. God's remnant are a people to whom Christ is exceedingly precious. His very *name* is unto them *as ointment poured forth;* they love to hear of him, they love to speak of him, and their meditations of him are sweet; "the desire of their soul is unto him, and the remembrance of his name;" and they are ready to say with David, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" &c., or with Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

2. God's remnant are a people that do not reckon themselves at home while they are here. This is not their proper country; but "they look for a better country, that is a heavenly," Heb. xi. 16. They "look for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," ver. 10. See this to be the character of God's remnant, ver. 13; the apostle tells us of these worthies, that "they confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." This confession David makes, Psal. cxix. 19: "I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy commandments from me." So then, if your home be here, you are none of God's remnant; if your thoughts and affections be confined within the narrow limits of time. God's remnant are a people that are "coming up from the wilderness;" they are always ascending and mounting heavenward, in their affections and desires: they "look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen."

3. God's remnant are a people that speak and think much on God. See this to be their character, Mal. iii. 16: "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." Try yourselves by this. It is the character of the wicked, that "God is not in all their thoughts;" and he is as seldom in their mouths, except in a way of profanation. But God's remnant, I say, think much on God; and their thoughts of God, O how precious are they to their souls! Psal. cxxxix. 17; and out of the abundance of their hearts their mouths speak honourably and reverently of him. They will speak to one another of his word, of his works, of his providences, and of his ordinances; their "lips are like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh."

4. God's remnant are a praying people: Psal. xxiv. 6: "This is the generation that seek thy face, O Jacob!" or, "O

God of Jacob!" whereas it is given as the character of the wicked, Psal. xiv. 4, that they *call not upon God.* They either live in the total neglect of this duty; or, if they do it at all, it is in a hypocritical, formal, and overly manner. But God's remnant seek the face of God; they seek him with fervency, with *truth in the inward parts;* they seek him believingly; they seek him constantly and perseveringly, which the hypocrite will not do: Job xxvii. 10: "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?"

5. God's remnant are a mourning people. They mourn over their own sins, in the first place: Ezek. vii. 16. The remnant of Jacob "that escape, they shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, every one mourning for their iniquity." They mourn over the errors of their hearts, and the iniquity of their lives, and are ready to cry out, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold on me," &c. And then they mourn, not only for their own personal sins, but for public sins; the sins of others, by which the land is defiled: "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law; I beheld transgressors, and was grieved." That this is the character of God's remnant, you may see from Ezek. ix. 4: "Go through the city, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and cry for all the abominations done in the midst thereof." And then they mourn for the calamities and desolations of Zion, when they see "the boar out of the wood wasting her, and the wild beasts out of the forest devouring her:" Psal. cxxxvii. 1: "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down, and wept when we remembered Zion." And then they mourn when they see ordinances corrupted, or God's candlestick in any measure removed, the Lord's people deprived of their wonted freedom and liberty in waiting upon him in these galleries: Zeph. iii. 18: "I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, to whom the reproach of it was a burden."

6. God's remnant are a people that will rather venture upon suffering than sinning. They rather venture to run the risk of displeasing kings and queens, potentates and parliaments, than venture upon the displeasing of God: they can rather venture on the rack of outward torments, than upon the rack of an accusing conscience. See this to be the character of God's remnant in the three children, Dan. iii. &c.; and Moses, (Heb. xi. 27,) "who forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." Many other marks of God's remnant might be insisted upon. They are a people that cannot live without Christ, and fellowship and communion with him, Cant. iii. 1; Job xxiii. 3: "O that I knew where I might find him!

that I might come even to his seat!" They are a people that will not rest in their attainments, but press towards the uttermost of grace and holiness, Phil. iii. 12. They press after more nearness to Christ, Cant. viii. 1. They love holiness for itself, Psal. cxix. 140. Christ for himself; yea, they love heaven for Christ and holiness. In a word, they love holiness, be the event what it will.

USE 4, is of exhortation. Is it so, that God's remnant, who are privileged to *walk with Christ in white*, are such as keep their garments clean? O then! let me exhort all hearing me, particularly you who have been professing yourselves among the number of God's remnant, by drawing near to him in the holy ordinance of his supper; let me, I say, exhort you to keep your garments clean; be exhorted to the study of true gospel-holiness, both in heart and life. And, by way of motive, I would have you to consider these things following.

MOTIVE 1. Consider, that you are in continual hazard of defiling your garments. You are in danger from every quarter: As, 1*st*, You are in danger from the world. There are many things in the world that are of a very defiling and polluting nature. There are many polluting opinions broached in the world, which go very glib away with nature, and which nature is very ready to catch at and embrace; as, That God is altogether made up of mercy, and will never damn any of his creatures: That Christ died for all: That morality runs parallel with grace: That an empty profession is enough to save folk: That it is better to keep the body whole than the conscience pure: That to be zealous for religion is to be "righteous overmuch." These, and many other such opinions, are of a polluting nature; and we are in danger of defiling ourselves with them. And then, the examples of the world are very infectious; the examples of magistrates and ministers, as you see from Hos. v. 1: "Hear ye this, O priests; give ye ear, O house of the king; because ye have been a snare on Mizpeh, and a net spread upon Tabor." And then you are in danger from the example of professors, who, perhaps, have a great name for religion in the church of God. O! will you say, such a man doth so and so, and why may not I do it also? But remember, sirs, that there are many hypocrites in the church of God, that go under a mask of religion. And supposing them to have the reality of grace, yet they may be under a spiritual decay; they may be sadly deserted of God: And do you think, that in this case they are to be imitated? And besides, suppose them to be ever such eminent persons, yet, according to the apostle's direction, we are to be followers of them no farther than they are followers of Christ. And besides, we are in

danger from the frowns and flatteries of the world. If the world cannot get us allured into sin by its enticing promises, it will study to drive us into a compliance, by threats of trouble and persecution. Thus, I say, we are in imminent danger from the world. The apostle James exhorts us to "keep ourselves unspotted from the world," chap. i. 27. 2*dly*, You are in danger from Satan, that subtle and malicious enemy, who "goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." He waits for your halting, and is always ready to trip up your heels. And I assure you, sirs, if you have got any love-token from the Lord at this occasion, this enemy will do his best, or worst rather, to you and it. It was but a little after Peter had been feasting with Christ, at this holy ordinance of the supper, that Christ told him, (Luke xxii. 31,) "Simon, Simon, Satan hath sought to winnow thee as wheat." And therefore you had need to be on your guard as to this enemy, and labour "not to be ignorant of his devices." 3*dly*, You are in danger of defiling your garments from your own hearts. My friends, would not that city be exposed to great danger, which is not only besieged with an army from without, but has a strong and powerful party within, that keeps a correspondence with the enemy without, and is ready to comply with all his demands? Just so is it with us: we are not only besieged with the world, and with Satan, who are our enemies without; but there is a strong party of indwelling sin and corruption within us, that is ready, upon all occasions, to betray us into our enemies' hands. This made David cry out, "Who can understand his errors?" and Paul, "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death!" So much for the first motive.

Mot. 2. By keeping your garments clean, you comply and fall in with God's great design in all his dispensations towards you, whether more immediate or mediate. God's great end in all is to bring his people to the study of gospel-purity and holiness. This is the design of his electing some of the posterity of Adam from all eternity: Eph. i. 4: "He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." It is a very foolish way of arguing that some people have: If I be elected, I shall be saved, let me live as I list; for God, like all other wise agents, not only decrees the end, but the means leading to that end. Now, holiness is the King's high-way, in which he has ordained and decreed to bring the elect to glory: 2 Thes. ii. 13: "God hath chosen us from the beginning to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." This is the design of redemption. Christ did not die, sirs, to purchase a latitude for us to sin: No, no: Tit. ii. 14:

"He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." This is the design of our creation. Why did you get a being, but that you might glorify and serve God? "This people have I formed for myself, that they may show forth my praise." And this is not only the design of our first, but of our second creation; "for he hath created us in Christ unto good works." This is the design of our effectual calling; "for God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness:" no; "he hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling." This is the design of the whole word of God. Why has God privileged us with his statutes and testimonies, but that they may be "a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path," to keep us out of the polluting ways of sin? Psal. cxix. 9. "Whereby shall a young man cleanse his way, but by taking heed thereto, according to thy word?" This is the design of the promises of the word. However carnal persons may make the promises a pillow of security, yet God's design in giving them, is to excite his people to keep clean garments: 2 Cor. vii. 1: "Dearly beloved, having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness, in the fear of God." This is the design of the threatenings of the word, that so men, knowing the terror of God, may be persuaded to keep at a distance from sin, the abominable thing that his soul hates, and may not defile their garments therewith. This is the design of all providences by which God exercises his people. Why doth God cast thee into the furnace? O man! his design is to purge away thy dross: Is. xxvii. 9: "By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." The Lord chastens us, that we may be "partakers of his holiness," Heb. xii. 10. This is the design, not only of cross, but of favourable providences. "The goodness of God" should "lead us to repentance," and lays a deep obligation on us to stand off from sin, which is offensive to our gracious Benefactor. This is the design, not only of all providences, but of all ordinances, and of the whole dispensation of the grace of God in the gospel: Tit. ii. 11, 12: "For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." This is the design, not only of the preaching of the word, but of the administration of the sacraments. In baptism, we are solemnly devoted to the service of God, and are engaged to walk as those that are called by "the name of Christ," who are bound "to depart from iniquity." And in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, we solemnly renew, be-

fore God, angels, and men, our baptismal engagements, and swear to keep our garments clean from the pollution of sin; and that by laying our hands on the body and blood of the Lord Jesus. This is the design of every frown, and of every smile. Doth God at any time fill thee with "joy and peace in believing?" lifts he up the light of his countenance upon thee? The language of this is, O do not defile thy garments! "God will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; but let them not return again to folly." And why doth God at any time hide his face, and leave thee in the dark, but to engage you to more tenderness in time to come, in keeping at a distance from these pollutions, by which he has been provoked to forsake thee? Thus, I say, if you do not keep your garments clean, you counteract the great design of God in all his dispensations towards you. How dangerous is it to be found fighting against God!

Mot. 3. Consider the dismal effects that will follow upon your defiling your garments. 1*st*, You will ruin your reputation, and render your names unsavoury in the world. And this is no small loss; for "a good name," says Solomon, "is as precious ointment," and renders a man capable to do service to God in his day and generation. In Prov. vi. 33, it is said of the adulterer, "A wound and dishonour shall he get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away." When professors of religion, or ministers, defile their garments by sin, especially sins of a public nature, they wound their reputation, bring a reproach upon themselves that is not easily wiped away; and not only so, but make the word of the Lord, in their mouths, to be contemned and despised. You may read a scripture for this, Mal. ii. 8, 9: It is spoken of the priests of that day, "Ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law." 2*dly*, You will stain and pollute your souls, which you ought to keep pure as a holy temple unto God. And how dangerous a thing this is, you may see from 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." My friends, you have been solemnly consecrating your souls and bodies unto God, as his temple; and if any of you shall after this *return with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow, that* seemed to be *washed, to wallow* again in the puddle of sin, you run a very dreadful risk. Utter "destruction from the Lord, and from the glory of his power," is abiding all those that are hypocrites in heart.

And dreadful temporal destruction from the Lord may overtake even his own children, who defile their garments: "For this cause many are weak and sickly, and many sleep." 3*dly*, You will break your peace, and mar your comfort. If you keep not your garments clean, you may provoke the Lord to fill you with terrors, and to cast such a spark of hell-fire into your bosoms as shall make you roar, and cry out of broken bones, with David; or, with Job, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit." 4*thly*, You will cast a blot upon religion, and on "the good ways of the Lord." If you who have been professing to own Christ at his table, shall be found defiling your garments, by lying, swearing, drunkenness, or the like, what will the graceless world say? They will conclude, that professors are but a company of hypocrites; that religion is nothing but a piece of trick and imposture. You will be a blemish to Christian society: "These are spots," says the apostle, "in your feasts of charity." And he speaks of some, who, through their untenderness, "made the way of the Lord to be *evil spoken of*." 5*thly*, You will dishonour Christ, that glorious Master whom you have been professing to own. Hence the Lord complains of the children of Israel, that they, by their wickedness, caused his "name to be polluted among the Heathen." David's sin made the name of God to be blasphemed and reproached. 6*thly*, By polluting your garments, you will "offend the generation of the righteous;" and "it were better for you that a millstone were hanged about your necks, and ye cast into the midst of the sea, than that ye should offend one of Christ's little ones." It is a dangerous thing to grieve the hearts of those that are dear unto God; for God will not grieve their hearts; and he will resent it, if any other do it by their untenderness. 7*thly*, You will harden others in their sins. When the wicked see professors, or ministers, going along with them, they conclude, that their way is the best of it, and preferable to the way of religion. Thus, you see the dismal effects that will follow upon your defiling your garments.

Mot. 4. Consider the great advantages that shall accrue to you by keeping your garments clean. 1*st*, It will yield you great peace; peace in life; for "as many as walk according to this rule, peace shall be upon them." Peace in the midst of all troubles: "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of a good conscience." Peace at death: Psal. xxxvii. 37: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." Peace after death. In Is. lvii. 2, we are told, that "the righteous," at death, "enter into peace; they rest upon their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." Peace at the last judgment. It is only the cleanly remnant to whom

the Lord will say then, "Lift up your heads; for the day of your redemption draweth nigh." *2dly*, By keeping clean garments, you will be in a continual fitness for maintaining fellowship and communion with God in any ordinance of his appointment; for it is the man that "hath clean hands, and a pure heart," that shall stand on God's holy hill, and have a place in his tabernacle. And not only so, but it will fill you with a holy boldness and confidence, in your approaches to God in the ordinances of his appointment: Job xi. 14, 15: "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away," &c. *3dly*, The influences of ordinances will stay the longer upon you, that you keep your garments clean. What is the reason why the impression of any thing of God, that we meet with in ordinances, so soon vanishes, like the morning cloud? The reason is, the untenderness of our walk: we lie down among the pots of sin, and this makes God to withdraw from us. We read of some mountains that are so high, that if men draw figures in the sand upon the tops of them, they will abide for many years. The reason is, they are so high, that they are above the winds and rains. O sirs, if we were living and walking on high with God, the impression of ordinances would stay longer with us than they do. *4thly*, By keeping your garments clean, you will perhaps save the souls of others, and commend religion to them. Hence is that [direction] of Christ, (Matth. v. 16,) "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." *5thly*, By keeping your garments clean, you will find more strength to keep yourselves: "for the way of the Lord is strength to the upright." If ye keep God's way, he will "keep you in the hour of temptation," Rev. iii. 10. God will keep you by his power through faith unto salvation. *6thly*, After a little time is elapsed, ye shall be clothed in white, and walk with Christ in the new Jerusalem, according to his promise in the text.

Now, I conclude all with directions and advices, in order to your keeping of your garments clean.

1. Be persuaded of your own utter inability to keep your garments clean by your own power, or the strength of created grace: for "the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps."

2. Take care that you be united to Christ, the fountain of holiness; for you do but wash the Ethiopian, while you attempt to make yourselves clean and holy, while you grow on the root of the old Adam. You may indeed "wash the outside of the cup and platter," but you will remain "filthy still" in the sight of God, till you be created in Christ, the true root of sanctification: "Can a man gather grapes of thorns, or figs

of thistles?" The tree must be good before the fruit be good.

3. Being united to Christ, you must make daily use of him by faith. Do not think, that, when you have first believed in Christ, your work is done; no, your life must be a life of faith. By faith we live, by faith we stand, by faith we work, by faith we fight; and "whatever we do, in word or deed," we must "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." You must be always "building up yourselves in your most holy faith," and going on from faith to faith; and whenever you have, through infirmity, or the prevalency of temptation, defiled your garments, be sure to run by faith unto the blood of sprinkling, that you may get your hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.

4. Set God continually before you, and keep up the impression of his all-seeing eye on your spirits: Psal. xvi. 8: "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

5. Be much in viewing and meditating on the dismal and terrible effects of sin; how it did cast angels out of heaven, Adam out of Paradise, and brought God's curse upon all his posterity; how it brought a deluge on the old world, Sodom and Gomorrah burnt by fire and brimstone; how it made the earth to swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

6. If you would keep your garments clean, O then beware of going to the utmost length of Christian liberty; it is dangerous to come too near God's marches. We should take heed to ourselves, even in the use of things that are in themselves lawful; "many things are lawful," but every thing lawful is not at all times "expedient." You would shun every "appearance of evil;" do not stand in the way of temptations, or occasions of sin. And, in particular, take care to avoid evil company; for "can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt?"

7. Beware of giving your consent and countenance to the sins of others; for hereby ye shall be "partakers with them in their sins." We may not only defile our garments by personal sins, but by the sins of others, when we encourage them in an evil way, when we assent or consent to them, or do not faithfully warn and reprove them, or endeavour to reclaim them.

8. *Lastly*, Be importunate with God, at the throne of grace, for guidance and direction; for "unless the Lord keep the city, the watchmen watch in vain." Unless his "grace be sufficient for" us, we will soon be carried down the stream of temptation and corruption; for "the way of man is not in himself." And therefore, I say, plead hard at the throne, that the Lord

would keep you, who "keeps the feet of his saints." And for this end plead the promise that he has made to his people, Jer. xxxii. 40: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Zech. x. 12: "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord."

SERMON II.

THE BACKSLIDER CHARACTERIZED; OR, THE EVIL AND DANGER OF DEFECTION DESCRIBED.*

If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.—Heb. x. 38.

[The following Discourse was represented to the commission, May 1725, by Mr. Alexander Anderson, as if it had been of such a turbulent or erroneous tendency, that he himself, preaching after me, was obliged publicly to contradict me. The following notes are, to the best of my remembrance, the *ipsissima verba* which I delivered at that time. Whether the doctrines contained therein deserved the character he gave them before the Reverend Commission, or if he had ground publicly to contradict, I submit to the judgment of the impartial world.]

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.—John vi. 66.

In the beginning of this chapter, our blessed Lord works a notable miracle; he feeds five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes, twelve baskets of fragments remaining. The multitude is so taken with this miraculous entertainment, that they would needs make him a king. But our lowly King of Zion did not affect worldly grandeur, his kingdom not being of this world; therefore he withdraws himself, and passes over the sea to Capernaum. Many of the multitude, whom he had fed, followed him thither. And there our blessed Lord takes occasion to preach a very heavenly and spiritual sermon to them, holding out the necessity of living and feed-

* Preached at Dysart, on a thanksgiving day, after the sacrament, Monday, October 7, 1714.

ing by faith upon him, in order to everlasting life. These carnal hearers are exceedingly stumbled at the spirituality of his doctrine, looking upon it as a piece of unaccountable stuff and nonsense. Upon which they begin to drop off from him, as the evangelist remarks here, in the words of my text, *From that time many of his disciples went back*, &c.

In which words we may notice, 1. A defection, or going back from Christ. 2. The season of it: namely, *From that time*, or, after he had preached the foregoing sermon. 3. The cause of it, implied in the time, namely, the spirituality of his doctrine. 4. The persons guilty of this defection, namely, professed disciples; and that not a few, but many of them. 5. The final and irrecoverable nature of their defection, they *walked no more with him.*

The words are plain and easy; and therefore there is no need of any critical explication. Wherefore, take this native observation from them; namely,—

Doct. "That there are some seasons in which many of Christ's pretended disciples fall off from him, and that finally and irrecoverably. *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*"

In handling this doctrine, I shall observe the order of the words, and speak a little,

I. To this defection, or falling off from Christ.

II. Inquire a little into the causes of it.

III. The seasons of it.

IV. The persons guilty of the defection, namely, the disciples.

V. Give a few characters of those who fall off finally, and walk no more with him.

VI. Apply the whole.

I. I say, I will speak a little *of this defection or falling off from Christ.* And here I would, 1. Give you some of the scriptural names of it. 2. Speak of the kinds and degrees of it. 3. Notice some of its ingredients. 4. Mention some of its concomitants.

First, I would give you some scriptural names by which it is called. And sometimes it is called *a looking back:* Luke ix. 62: "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven." My friends, you have been professing to set your faces heavenward; O beware of casting a back-look upon your old lovers: "Remember Lot's wife;" take heed that God do not set you up as monuments of his vengeance. Again; it is sometimes called *a turning back:* Lam. i. 8: "Jerusalem sigheth, and turneth back-

ward." The way to heaven will not admit of a retreat; you must still be pressing forward, whatever opposition may be in your way. Again; sometimes it is called *a drawing back:* Heb. x. 38: *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.* Moreover, it is called *a sliding back;* intimating, that the people who are not well buckled in religion stand upon slippery ground: Hos. xi. 7: "My people are bent to backsliding from me." Farthermore, it is called *a falling back:* Is. xxviii. 13: 'The word of the Lord was unto them, precept upon precept, and line upon line; that they might go and fall backward, and be broken, and snared and taken;" and you know a backward fall is exceedingly dangerous. *Lastly,* To mention no more, it is called *a turning aside.* It is said of Israel, that "they quickly turned aside like a deceitful bow;" which frustrates the design of the archer, by shooting away, or beside the mark. They who "turn aside into crooked ways," whatever may be their pretences to religion, miss the mark of the same, even the "mark and prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and shall be led forth," and have their part "with the workers of iniquity."

Secondly, I come to treat of the kinds and degrees of defections from Christ. And, not to multiply distinctions, which are more ready to confound than edify hearers, I shall only mention these two or three:—

1. Defection from Christ is sometimes more universal and general, of the body of a church and nation together. Thus, Ephesus, (Rev. ii.) is charged with falling from her first love. And the whole body of the Israelitish nation are engaged together in a defection, by going in to worship the idolatrous calves which Jeroboam erected at Dan and Bethel: and it was so universal, that the prophet Elijah thought he had been left alone; though, indeed, the Lord tells him, that he had "seven thousand in Israel, which had not bowed the knee to Baal." And sometimes it is more special and particular, as when a single society, family, or particular person, enters upon a course of defection and backsliding from Christ and his ways; of which instances may be afterwards named.

2. Sometimes it is more open and avowed, in contradistinction from the former, by abandoning and relinquishing the very profession of religion to which they once pretended, and become openly wicked and flagitious, giving themselves loose reins in a way of sin. Or, it is more hidden and secret, when, though there be still a profession of religion kept up; yet the power of godliness is quite forsaken, and the heart maintains a close correspondence with sin, and lives in a secret trade of wickedness, inconsistent with the rules of Christianity.

3. There is a total, as also a partial defection or falling off from Christ. A total or final, is that of the wicked and reprobate, who, when they fall, are like lead, or a stone falling into deep water, which never rises again; as it is said of Pharaoh and his host, "They sank like lead in the mighty waters:" they make an utter "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience." A partial defection is incident even to the godly themselves. I may call it *temporary;* for they may be left for a considerable time, to make many woful steps of defection from Christ and his ways; as is plain from the instances of David, Peter, Abraham, and many others. But when they fall, they are like wood or cork, falling into water, who, though they sink at first, yet they rise again by faith and repentance, which influence the reformation of their lives, and which, in pursuit of the divine purpose of grace for their salvation, are actuated in them by the Holy Spirit, according to Psal. xxxvii. 24: "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." The defection here spoken of in the text, seems to have been of the first kinds of each division. It was general and public; for there was a great multitude of them, as we read in the beginning of the chapter: it was open and avowed; for they put a slight on Christ in the face of the sun: and it was total and final; they walked no more with him, nor looked after Christ any more.

Thirdly, I come to notice some ingredients of this defection here spoken of. And there appears to have been these things in it:—

1. A dissatisfaction with Christ, and a vilifying both him and his way; for they said, ver. 42, "Is not his father and his mother, and sisters with us? how then came he down from heaven?"

2. A murmuring and repining against the spirituality of his doctrine, out of a rooted enmity and prejudice against it: ver. 41: "They murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread of life which came down from heaven:" and again, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?"

3. A formal disputing and arguing against his doctrine, as repugnant to reason. They set up their reason as the standard of revelation, and will receive nothing but what they were able to comprehend; for *they strove*, or disputed, "amongst themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" ver. 52.

4. A formal casting off with Christ, and turning back to their old way and trade of living, by which their latter end was worse than their beginning; for *they went back and followed him no more*, as in the text.

Fourthly, I come to mention some concomitants of defection from Christ:

1. It is commonly accompanied with a halting and wavering between sin and duty, as Israel did between God and Baal: "How long," says Elijah to them, "do ye halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." When this wavering befalls people, they cannot stand long; for "a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways," says James. "Their heart is divided; therefore shall they be found faulty."

2. It is commonly attended with a mercenary kind of spirit. For, as secular and worldly interest is the spring of all their religion; so it is the spring of their apostacy and defection from it; as is plain from what our Lord tells his pretended disciples: "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." Where this mercenary spirit prevails, folk will stand by Christ and religion as long as it will stand with their selfish and secular designs, but no longer. Christ, conscience, religion, and every thing, must truckle to this at length.

3. It is attended with a stretching of Christian liberty to the uttermost pitch, and a dallying with the appearances of evil. "O," will the man say, "what needs all this needless nicety and preciseness? I may adventure thus far, and yet keep in both with God and a good conscience." Like Eve, who thought she might tamper with the temptation, without any hazard of a compliance; or Samson, who thought he might dally with Delilah, and yet keep in with God. O sirs, it is dangerous going too near God's marches; for, as one says, he that will go all the length he may, when occasion serves, will go farther than he ought.

4. It is attended with a snarling at reproofs. They cannot abide to have their sores ripped up, and the evil of their ways discovered. Let ministers preach ever such sound doctrine, yet if they but point towards the quarter where their defections lie, presently they are like wild bulls in a net, full of fury and resentment. We find too much of this, even in good men, when engaged in a partial defection. Asa was so irritated by the reproof of the prophet, that he cast him into prison, for telling him that he was fallen from his former confidence in God, when the hosts of the Ethiopians came up against him. And the Galatians reckoned Paul their "enemy, because he told them the truth."

With a snatching at the reputation of those that stand their ground, or who give any testimony against their defections: and if they can perceive any such making but the least wrong step, they are sure to make it as open and public to the world

as possible, and to represent it in the blackest character imaginable. It is a very true observation, That backsliders are commonly backbiters. They cannot abide to see any outshine themselves in holiness and tenderness; and therefore they lie at the catch, to wound the reputation of those that cannot run the same length with themselves. This made David pray, "Deliver me, O Lord, from all my transgressions, and make me not the reproach of the foolish: for when my foot slippeth, mine enemies do magnify themselves against me."

6. Division is usually the concomitant and fruit of defection. If we should trace all divisions to their spring, by which the bowels of the church of God have been rent, since the first ages of Christianity, we should still find them taking their rise from the bitter fountain of defection. What was it but the defections of some in the church of Corinth, that gave birth to that division, of which the apostle complains, 1 Cor. i.? What was it but the defections of the church of Rome, that has made such a wide breach between Protestants and Papists? It is true, every party and set of men have preached up peace, and cried out against division; as the Papists to this very day, exclaim against us for making a rupture in the church of Christ: whereas it is not we, but they themselves, that make the rupture by their defections. We must not say, *A confederacy* with any in a way of sin, or purchase peace at the expense of truth and holiness. This was the sentiment of good old Jacob on his death-bed, Gen. xlix. 5: "Simeon and Levi are brethren in iniquity: instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret," &c. Many other things might be added as concomitants of defection; but I must not stand on them. I go on, therefore, to—

II. The *second* thing in the text and method, which was, to *inquire a little into the causes of defection.* And,

1. The main cause, or rather occasion, of this defection here mentioned, was the unpleasantness of Christ's doctrine to the sensual and carnal inclinations of these pretended disciples mentioned in our text. His doctrine did not suit their humours, and answer their expectations; therefore they *went back, and walked no more with him.* Just like many among ourselves, who, if ministers do not preach according to their fancies, if they be free and faithful, and preach against the defection of which they are guilty, they either turn their backs on them, or cry out upon them as men of turbulent spirits, incendiaries, fire-brands, and what not?" But ministers need not be discouraged on this account, since the apostles of our Lord were characterized after the same manner: "These are they that have turned the world upside down." I fear there are many among us, who, if they would speak the language of

their hearts, would join issue with that people, Isa. xxx. 10: "Who said to their seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits. But, sirs, we need not wonder to see folk stumbling at the plain truths of the word, seeing Christ himself is "set for the fall," as well as for the "rising of many in Israel."

2. The love of worldly riches is another great cause of defection, as is plain from what the apostle says, 1 Tim. vi. 10: "The love of money is the root of all evil: which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Where the love of the world has the ascendant in the heart, the love of God cannot be strong; for, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him:" and where the love of God is not, it is impossible for that man to stand his ground.

3. The love of worldly ease is another great cause of defection from Christ, especially in a time of persecution for the gospel's sake; for then it will be said, as Peter to Christ, when dissuading him from going up to Jerusalem, *Master, spare thyself;* it is best to sleep in a whole skin. But let us remember what Christ says in this case, Matth. xvi. 25: "Whosoever shall save his life, shall lose *it*; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it."

4. The fear of man is another cause of defection: "The fear of man," says Solomon, "bringeth a snare;" especially the fear of offending and displeasing great men, upon whom we have any kind of dependence. But, as an antidote against this, let us compare the wrath of man with the wrath of the eternal God. Shall we adventure to run upon "the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler," to avoid the displeasure of a worm like ourselves? Is. li. 12: "Who art thou, that shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, who shall be made as grass? and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?" To the same purpose is that caveat given us by our blessed Lord; "Fear not man, that can kill the body, but cannot kill the soul," &c.

5. Bad example has a fatal influence this way; and especially the bad example of men of influence and authority, such as ministers and magistrates. You have a word for this, Hos. v. 1: "Hear ye this, O priests, and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you; because ye have been a snare on Mizpeh, and a net spread upon Tabor." When we have conceived a great veneration for any man, we are very ready to run after his example. Thus, Gal. ii. 13: Barnabas, with many of the converted Jews at Antioch, were led away with Peter's dissimulation, who seemed to them a pillar;

for which Paul withstood him to the very face. Let us always remember, that we are to be followers of no man, but in so far as they are followers of Christ.

6. The treachery and deceit of the heart, with its natural bent and bias towards sin: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." That character given Israel is exceedingly applicable to it, Hos. xi. 7: "They are bent to backsliding." There is not only an easiness and ductility in the heart of man to sin, but a strong propensity and inclination. So that it was not without sufficient ground that Solomon tells us, Prov. xxviii. 26: "He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool." Let us, therefore, advert to that caveat of the apostle's, Heb. iii. 12: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." I might mention many other causes, if time would allow, such as absolute and downright hypocrisy in their management with God. If the heart be not "right with God," people can never be "steadfast in his covenant." Again; self-confidence, when men lean to their own understanding, trust to their own strength; like Peter, "Though all men should forsake thee, yet will not I." These resolutions, that are founded upon our own strength, will prove like Jonah's gourd, wither, and come to naught, as soon as ever the wind of temptation blows on them. We are not to trust any created grace that is in us, but only the grace that is in Christ Jesus: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Again; when folk voluntarily disband their guard, and slack their watch, they yield themselves an easy prey to the devil: and therefore, "Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the devil goes about, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Again; when folk do not lay a sure foundation. He that builds must count the cost. They that have not a root of solid grace in themselves, will fall away in the time of temptation. And so much for the causes of defection, the second thing proposed.

III. The *third* thing was, to *inquire a little into the seasons of defection.* The words also give ground for this inquiry: *From that time many of his disciples went back.* You may take these few causes, among many others: —

1. Defections may happen after God has been making very signal and remarkable appearances in his providence for a people. Christ, in the beginning of this chapter, had made a signal, yea, a miraculous appearance, for those people, by feeding them in a desert place; and yet a day or two after, they *went back, and walked no more with him.* This was the sin of Israel: God delivers them out of their Egyptian bondage, in a wonderful way, plaguing their enemies, and dividing the Red Sea before them; and yet they soon forgot his mighty

works, and turned aside from the right way. And, alas! may not this aggravate the defections of which we in this land are guilty, that we have turned aside from God, after many surprising and almost miraculous deliverances that he has wrought for us?

2. Defections frequently happen in the midst of the clearest revelation of the gospel, and when the light of the gospel is shining with the greatest brightness among a people. This people here had heard Christ himself preach, who spake as never man spake; and yet, immediately upon the back of hearing him, they turned their back upon him. This also aggravates our defections, and abounding sins, that they are under the clearest sunshine of gospel-revelation: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin."

3. After very solemn professions of love and friendship to Christ. This people here professed such a kindness to Christ, that they would needs make him a king; and they are so taken with him, that they follow him to the other side of the sea; and yet, alas! they *went back, and walked no more with him.* Thus, Israel also, they seemingly professed, that "whatever the Lord their God should command them," that they would "observe and do;" but they quickly "turned aside like a deceitful bow." My friends, you have been professing friendship to Christ, before men and angels, by partaking of the symbols of his body and blood: O take care that you be not found practically renouncing your sacramental engagements, by entering upon a course of defection. Alas! may not the defections of many professors be dated from a communion-table? they come away, after they have got the sop, with more of hell and the devil in them than before.

4. After some remarkable common illumination, and seeming experiences in religion, Heb. vi. &c. It was a high aggravation of Solomon's sin, that he went astray after the Lord had several times appeared to him.

5. The time of worldly prosperity. Deut. xxxii. 15: "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked." And Hos. xiii. 6: "According to their pasture, so were they filled: they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me."

6. A time of trial and persecution for righteousness' sake, when enemies are invading the rights and privileges of the church of Christ, casting fire into his sanctuary, and polluting the dwelling-place of his name. This is a season in which the Lord calls for a special testimony for himself at the hand of professors; and yet even then many fall off, and sail with the stream. The stony-ground hearers, "when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they are of-

fended." Rotten fruit usually drops off in a storm; and the wind commonly drives away the chaff.

7. Defection may happen among a people, even when there is a remnant keeping their ground, and maintaining their integrity; as you see here. When the multitude are turning their back on Christ, he says to his disciples, "Will ye also go away?" To which they answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee? thou hast the words of eternal life." Rev. iii. 4: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments," &c.

IV. The *fourth* thing is, to *inquire who they are that make this defection from Christ.* We are told here, that they were disciples; that is, they were so professedly. They pretended to be disciples, and had gone considerable lengths with Christ, which had procured for them this character. For,

1. They had entered into Christ's school, and got many a sweet lesson: but, *hearing many things, they did not observe them.*

They were disciples; for they owned him as their Master and Lord: ver. 25. "When they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" and, ver. 34: "Lord, evermore give us this bread," Of the same kind are these, (Matth. vii. 22,) who cried, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" &c.

3. They were a set of men that had a very fiery edge upon them for awhile: for they not only followed Christ through the sea, but they have seemingly very strong desires after Christ, and the bread of life; saying, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." But though "with their mouth they pretended much love, yet their heart went after their covetousness."

4. They are called disciples; for they joined themselves to the society of the true and real disciples of Christ, and go along with them, in following Christ for a considerable time; but yet turn their backs on them at length.

5. They had been eye and ear witnesses of the doctrine and miracles of Christ: and yet, for all this, they *went back, and walked no more with him.* Thus, you see upon what account they might be called disciples.

And now, seeing in the text we are told that they were many; hence, therefore, you may take the following observations or remarks:—

1. That, among the multitude of professors, Christ has commonly but a thin backing in a winnowing and sifting time: There was but a handful that staid with Christ; the greatest multitude dropped off. The heap of corn is but small, when the straw and chaff are separated from it. Christ's flock is

but a little flock: "Many are called, but few are chosen. Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

2. As Christ has but a thin backing, so the greatest number of professors usually dance to the devil's pipe, and comply with the side of the times. Many of them went back, only the twelve staid behind: "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."

3. Defection from Christ is of a very spreading and contagious nature; "a little of this leaven" is fair to "leaven the whole lump;" like a pestilential air, it flies over a whole country or kingdom in a very little time. Among the many thousands in Israel, only seven thousand had not bowed to Baal. There were but "a few names in Sardis, which had not defiled their garments." Hence it follows,—

4. That the way of the multitude is always to be suspected. And people are never to think themselves safe enough, because they have many neighbours; for we are not to "follow a multitude to do evil," in regard the way of the multitude is a way commonly loathed of God.

5. The followers of Christ need not be discouraged because of the paucity of their number; for it has been so in all ages. It was so at first, and will be so to the end of the world: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith in the earth?" And therefore, I say, though you should sit like a pelican in the wilderness, and owl in the desert; though you should become the song of the drunkard, and be held for signs and wonders in Israel, because of the singularity of your way; yet be not discouraged at this, for it is far better to go to heaven alone than to hell in company.

Now, if it be asked, Why the Lord suffers defections among his professed disciples? I answer, briefly, 1. Because God will have a difference put "between the precious and the vile?" 1 Cor. xi. 19: "There must needs be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest." God will have the chaff distinguished from the wheat, the dross from the true gold; he will have his Israel proved and tried, that they may be distinguished from others. 2. That real disciples may be excited to cleave to the Lord with the more firmness and resolution: "Lord, to whom shall we go, but unto thee?" said the twelve, when they saw the multitude running away. We have a word to this purpose, Job xvii. 8, 9: "The innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite;" and then it immediately follows, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall add strength," as in the Hebrew, or "be stronger and stronger;" intimating that the defections of hypocrites from the way of

the Lord sharpens the resolution of the truly godly in cleaving to him; for at such a time, God, as it were, is issuing his proclamation in the camp of Israel, "Who is on the Lord's side?" To which we may add, that these defections of pretended disciples do, in a way of righteous judgment, prove stumbling-blocks to others, by which they are hardened in a way of sin. And thus a wo falls both upon the offender and the offended; according to that of Christ's, Matth. xviii. 7: "Wo unto the world because of offences: for it must needs be that offences come; but wo to that man by whom the offence cometh."

V. The *fifth* thing is, *to give a few characters of those who fall off finally, and walk no more with Christ.* Only, before I go on, I would premise, that I do not here offer to give positive marks of an irrecoverable condition; for who can set bounds to the infinite grace and mercy of him, to whom no case is desperate, and "who is able to save to the uttermost" of sin, and to the uttermost of misery? But all I do is, to offer some melancholy symptoms or presumptions of an irrecoverable defection.

1. It is a shrewd evidence of a final defection, when people fall off from the profession and practice of religion, after some signal, though common, illuminations and irradiations of the Spirit; for which you may read Heb. vi. 4—6.

2. When people, through the influence of these common illuminations in the knowledge of Christ, have been led to make considerable advances in the way of religion, and yet afterward apostatize, and fall back into the same puddle of wickedness which they seemed to have escaped. A pregnant scripture for this you have, 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.

3. When people knowingly and wilfully venture upon a way of sin, after they have received the knowledge of the truth: for which see Heb. x. 26, 27. When folk come that length, especially after a profession of religion, as to become mockers of true piety, attempting to ridicule things sacred, and to banter those out of their religion, whom they think to be aiming heavenward: this is a black mark of one that is entirely given up of God; this being an open proclamation of war against heaven. "Be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong."

4. Those whose hearts are filled with malice against the image of God in his people, who nauseate and detest the very picture of holiness in his people, and so become open persecutors of Christ in his members, and take all methods imaginable to extirpate the name of Christ and Christianity out of the world; as did the cursed apostate Julian.

5. When people get success and prosperity in a way of sin. They thirst after sin, and God grants them the desire of their

hearts. This is a sign of total and final defection; for, says, the Lord, "Backsliders in heart shall be filled with their own ways." Perhaps, you think all is right, because God in his providence does not check you in your sinful ways. But assure yourselves, there cannot be a sadder mark of his wrath and vengeance; for then he seems to be saying, "They are joined to their idols, let them alone.—Let him that is filthy, be filthy still."

6. When, after challenges of conscience, rebukes from the word and Spirit upon the account of sin, all comes to be hushed up in a profound silence, and the senses of the soul are locked up in a deep slumber, then it would appear, that God is saying, as he said to the old world, "My Spirit shall no more strive with them." They "would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts; and they walked in their own counsels.—I would have purged them, and they were not purged; therefore they shall not be purged from their filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon them." We have a sad instance of this nature, Is. vi. 10: There is a people on whom God had taken a great deal of pains, as we read, chap. v. He had chosen them as his vineyard, planted them in a fruitful soil: but all his labour was lost; they still went on in a course of defection and apostacy; "instead of grapes, they brought forth wild grapes." Well, at length God seals them up under a stroke of judicial blindness and hardness; so that no reproof from word, providence, or conscience, should ever affect them. "Go," says the Lord, "and make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed."

Before I proceed to the application, I shall obviate a question which some serious soul may be ready to move, upon what has been said on the former head; namely, Wherein lies the difference between the partial and temporary defections of the godly, and these total, final, and irrecoverable apostacies of hypocrites and temporary believers?

To which I answer, 1. The believer, when he is left to backslide, or to fall into any sin, howls and groans under it; it lies heavy on him, like a burden too heavy for him to bear. "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me." They can never enjoy themselves with satisfaction, till they be recovered again. An instance of this we have in the apostle Peter, after he had been left to make that foul step of defection, in denying Christ with curses and imprecations: after Christ gave him but a

look, he went out, and wept bitterly. The same we see in David, Psal. li. After he had been guilty of murder and adultery, in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba, how does he lament and bewail his folly? And that which principally touches them, is not so much the penal, as the moral evil of their defection; they are not so much grieved that they themselves suffer, as that God is dishonoured, and religion wounded by their means; as we see in David, Psal. li. 4: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

2. They are never at rest, or ease, till they have the guilt and filth of their sin expiated and washed away by the blood and Spirit of the Lord Jesus; and all the world will not quiet their consciences, till this be obtained. O, says David, after he had made this foul step, "wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin:" And again, ver. 7: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Whereas the hypocrite, when he falls, satisfies the clamours of his conscience, either by extenuating his sin, or by multiplying his duties: "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil?" But he never runs to Christ, to have his "conscience sprinkled from dead works."

3. The believer, after he has fallen, does not satisfy himself with a turning from sin to God, but he must have some reviving intimations of God's favour and reconciled countenance: as David, (ver. 8:) "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." Though all the world should fawn upon him, yet it will not please him, unless he get a smile from God himself.

4. When the believer falls, his fall leads him to bewail the corruption and depravation of his nature. He traces the streams to the fountain, and sits down there, and weeps over it, as the cause of all his defections and backslidings from God; as David did, (ver. 5:) "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me:" and looks up to God for a cast of renewing grace, (ver. 10:) "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Whereas hypocrites bewail the loss of their reputation more than they do their sin, or the depravation of their nature.

5. When believers fall, they come under fresh engagements, through grace, to walk more closely with God than ever they have done before, and endeavour to be more serviceable to him in their generation than ever; as David, (ver. 12, 13:) "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

6. As burnt children dread the fire, believers are afraid of falling into the same sins again; and for this end indent with God, not in their own, but only in his strength to keep them; as David, "Uphold me with thy free Spirit;" and again, elsewhere, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps may not slide:" and Psal. cxix. 5: "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" Now, from these marks of the partial falls of the godly, you may easily gather the difference between them, and the damnable apostacy and total defection of hypocrites and reprobates.

And now I go on to the application of this doctrine; and all the use I make of it shall be in a word of *exhortation*. Is it so, that many of Christ's pretended disciples do, some time or other, fall totally and finally away from him? Then let me exhort and persuade all hearing me, but especially you who have been lifting up your hands to him at a communion-table, and professing to be his disciples, by laying your hands on a slain Redeemer, to endeavour firmness and stability, in cleaving to Christ and his way. O let it not be said of you, as it is said of these disciples here, *From that time they went back, and walked no more with him.*

To enforce this exhortation, consider, *first*, the evil of apostacy either in part, or in whole.

1. It is a provocation of the highest nature. And there are especially two evils in it, which cannot but awaken divine resentment; namely, treachery and ingratitude. 1*st*, There is treachery in it. What husband would take it well, if his wife should abandon him, and follow after other lovers. My friends, you have been taking God for your husband, in a solemn manner, before angels and men; and will it not be treachery in the highest degree, to go and prostitute your souls to sin, his greatest enemy? Will not this cast a calumny and reproach upon God, as if others were better than he? This will make him say, "What iniquity have your fathers found in me?" &c. "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee?" 2*dly*, There is ingratitude in it, also. It was a very cutting word that Christ had to his disciples, in the verse following our text, "Will ye also leave me?" The same is he saying to every one of you: 'Will ye also go away, after such proofs of my kindness, after such repeated vows and obligations?' From all which it is evident, that apostacy is a provocation of the highest nature.

2. Your backsliding will give a deep wound to religion, and bring up a reproach upon the good ways of God. You have been owning him as your Lord and Master, and declaring before the world, that you think his service the best service,

his wages the best wages; that one day in his courts is better than a thousand. Now, if after all you backslide, will not the world conclude, that you have not found that in his service which you expected? And thus others will be scared from the good ways of the Lord.

3. You will grieve the hearts of the godly, whose hearts God would not grieve. And it is a dangerous thing to offend one of his little ones: "It were better for you that a mill-stone were hanged about your neck, and you cast into the midst of the sea, than that you should offend one of these little ones."

4. If you shall apostatize in the whole, and slide back with a perpetual backsliding, it will be a prelude of your eternal banishment and separation from the presence of God. God's soul takes no pleasure in backsliders, and therefore they can never have access into his gracious presence; consequently, "shall be punished with everlasting destruction."

5. If you be believers, and apostatize in part, you shall put a whip in God's hand to chastise you. If you shall after this turn careless in your walk, more remiss in duty, less frequent, less fervent, less lively, than before, you may assure yourselves, that you shall not go unpunished: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.—If his children forsake my law, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."

Secondly, Consider some great advantages of stabillity in cleaving to Christ, and standing firm to his cause and interest.

1. It will furnish you much inward peace and tranquility of mind: "Great peace have all they which love thy law." God tells Israel, that if they had cleaved to him and his way, "their peace should have been as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea."

2. It will glorify God, and reflect a lustre upon religion; make the world conclude you serve a good Master. Hence is that of Christ; "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

3. As backsliding strikes a damp upon the spirit at the approaches of death; so stability of heart, in the Lord's way, affords courage and confidence, through Christ, upon the approach of that grim messenger of the Lord of hosts. Hence is that of Paul, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," &c.

4. The reward of grace is ensured in Christ to the steadfast soul: 1 Cor. xv. 58. "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and your labour shall not

be in vain in the Lord." Remember, that your title to the reward comes in by virtue of your union with Christ; and O how glorious is that reward the steadfast soul is entitled to through him! It has a kingdom secured to it: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom." A throne: Rev. iii. 21: "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne." A crown is secured; a crown of life: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." A crown of glory: "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away." A crown of righteousness, which is "laid up for all that keep the faith, and love his appearing." A crown of joy, yea a crown of everlasting joy, shall be "upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away."

I conclude with two or three advices:—

1. Take care that the foundation be well laid, upon the everlasting Rock Jesus Christ; for this is the *foundation* that God hath *laid in Zion*, and *another foundation can no man lay*. You must be cemented to this foundation by the Spirit and faith, otherwise you can never stand in a day of trial; for your root being rottenness, your "blossom shall go up as the dust." The house built upon the sand fell, when the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon it; but the house founded upon this rock shall stand out against the utmost efforts of the gates of hell.

2. Maintain an everlasting jealousy over your own hearts; for "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool," considering that it is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Particularly take heed of the workings and sproutings of the bitter root of unbelief, which causes to depart from the living God, Heb. iii. 12.

3. Keep your eyes upon the promises of persevering grace, particularly that, Jer. xxxii. 40: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." If you plead and improve this promise by faith, it is impossible you can draw back; for it is "impossible for God to lie." God stands on both sides of the covenant, to fulfil both his and our part of the same; and therefore plead, that he may fulfil his in you, that he would keep you by his "power, through faith unto salvation."

4. Keep a steady eye on Christ, the blessed Mediator of the covenant." Eye him as the store-house and fountain of all your supplies of grace and strength; for it is "out of his fulness that we receive, and grace for grace." Eye him as your Captain, to fight all your battles against sin and Satan; for

he has "spoiled principalities and powers;" and if ever we overcome, it must be in the blood and strength of the Lamb. Eye him as your guide, to lead you through all the dark and difficult steps of your pilgrimage; for "he leads the blind in a way that they have not known." Eye him as your pattern; endeavour to imitate him in all his imitable perfections; run your Christian race, "looking unto Jesus." Remember how steady and firm he was in carrying on the great work of redemption; *he set his face like a flint* against all the storms and obstacles that lay in his way; "he did not faint, nor was he discouraged," but "travelled on in the greatness of his strength,—enduring the cross, and despising the shame;" for he said on the cross, "It is finished." So study ye, after his example, to run your Christian race, your course of obedience, and press on against all temptations and difficulties, till ye "have finished your course with joy," and arrive at "the mark and prize of the high calling of God in Christ."

5. Beware of the first beginnings of defection and backsliding; for one trip makes way for another. Defections, are like the rolling of a stone upon the brow of a high mountain; if once it begin to roll, it is fair never to rest till it be at the bottom. You have been upon the mount of God, sirs; and if you begin once to roll down the hill of your high professions and resolutions, it is a hundred to one if you do not land in the depths of apostacy, and at last in the depths of hell.

6. *Lastly*, Study to be well skilled in unmasking the mystery of iniquity, and in detecting the wiles and stratagems of the tempter, and to provide yourselves with suitable antidotes against every attack of the enemy. For instance, if he tell thee sin is pleasant, ask him, if the gripings of the worm of conscience be pleasant too? and if "one day in God's house" be not "better than a thousand in the tents of sin?" If he tell thee, that nobody sees, ask him If he can shut the eye of an omniscient God, whose "eyes are as a flame of fire," and who "setteth our most secret sins in the light of his countenance?" If he tell thee, that it is but a little one, ask him, If there be a little God? or if His displeasure be a little thing? If he tell thee, that sin is profitable, ask him, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" By considerations of this nature, the mind comes to be fortified against the attacks and onsets of that grand enemy of salvation, and prove a notable ballast to keep the soul firm and steady against the most violent storms and tempests that may blow either from earth or hell.

SERMON III.

THE WIND OF THE HOLY GHOST BLOWING UPON THE DRY BONES IN THE VALLEY OF VISION.*

Come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.—EZEK. XXXVII. 9.

IN the beginning of this chapter, the Lord, in a vision, brings the prophet Ezekiel into a valley full of dead men's bones, quite dried and withered, and asks him the question, If he thought it possible for these dry bones to live? thereby intimating, that although it was a thing impossible with men, yet it was easily effected by the almighty power of God. And, to convince him of it, he commands the prophet to speak to the dry bones, and to tell them, in his name, that he would make the breath of life to enter into them: which accordingly is done; for the prophet having in the name of the Lord, called upon the four winds to breathe upon the dry bones, immediately life enters into them, and they come together bone to his bone, and they lived, and "stood up upon their feet, and became an exceeding great army."

By which vision we have a lively representation of a threefold resurrection, as a late commentator (Mr. Henry) very well observes. 1. Of the resurrection of the body at the last day, and general resurrection, when God will command the earth to give up its dead, and the sea to give up its dead; and when, by the ministry of angels, the dust and bones of the saints shall be gathered from the four winds of heaven, to which they have been scattered. Or, 2. We have in this vision a lively representation of the resurrection of the soul from the grave of sin; which is effected by preaching or prophesying, as the instrumental, and by the powerful influence of the Spirit of the Lord, as the principal efficient cause of it: and the wind here spoken of is plainly said to be understood of the Spirit, (ver. 14:) "I will put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live." Or, 3. We have, by this vision, a representation of the resurrection of the church of God, from the grave of her bondage and captivity in Babylon, under which they were at present detained. And this, indeed, is the primary and immediate scope of the vision, as is plain from the

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explication that follows it, ver. 11—14. However, seeing the deliverance of the children of Israel out of their Babylonish captivity, was typical of our spiritual redemption purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, and in a day of power applied by the mighty and powerful operation of the Holy Spirit of God; and seeing it is this redemption with which we under the gospel are principally concerned, therefore I shall handle the words that I have read under this spiritual sense and meaning.

And in them briefly we have, 1. A dismal case supposed, and that is, spiritual deadness. The people of God were not only in bondage under their enemies, but likewise their souls were at this time in a languishing condition. But of this more afterwards.

2. We have a blessed remedy here expressed, and that is the breathings of the Spirit of the Lord, the influences of the Holy Ghost: *Come from the four winds, O breath*, &c. Now, these influences of the Holy Ghost are here described,

1*st*, From their nature, held out under the notion and metaphor of wind; *Come from the four winds, O breath.* There are three elements by which the operations of the Spirit are held out to us in scripture. Sometimes they are compared to *fire:* Matth. iii. 11: "He shall baptize you (speaking of Christ) with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Sometimes they are compared to *water:* Is. xliv. 3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed," &c. Sometimes the influences of the Spirit are held forth under the metaphor of *wind*, as in Cant. iv. 16: "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden." So here, by the wind, or breath here spoken of, we are principally to understand the Spirit: it is plainly declared to be the Spirit of God in the 14th verse of this chapter. I cannot stand to show you the grounds of this metaphor. Wind, you know, is of a cleansing, cooling, fructifying nature and virtue; it acts freely and irresistibly. It is not in the power of man to resist or oppose the blowings of the wind. So the influences of the Spirit cleanse and purify the heart; they allay the storms of conscience, "make the bones which were broken to rejoice?" they make the soul to "grow as the lily, and to cast forth its roots like Lebanon;" they render the soul fruitful "like the garden of God?" and the Spirit acts with a sovereign freedom, and irresistible efficacy, as you may hear afterwards. But,

2*dly*, These influences of the Holy Ghost, are described, from their variety, *four winds: Come from the four winds, O breath;* importing the manifold influences and operations of this one and eternal Spirit. Hence we read of the "north

and south wind," Cant. iv. 16; and of "the seven spirits that are before the throne of God," Rev. iv. 5.

3*dly*, These influences are described from their acting or operation, which is here called a *breathing: Breathe upon these slain.* By the acting of this almighty wind, our natural life was produced and formed, Gen. ii. 7. We are there told, that after God had "formed man of the dust of the ground, he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and he became a living soul." Hence is that of Elihu, Job xxxiii. 4: "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." And it is by the influences of the same almighty breath, that our souls are "quickened, when dead in trespasses and sins," and our spiritual life is formed within us. But then,

4*thly*, These influences are described from the end and effect of their operation: *Breathe upon these slain, that they may live;* that is, that the dry bones may become living souls, that out of these stones children may be raised up to Abraham.

Now, from these words, thus briefly explained, I only offer you this one observation; namely,

Doct. "That as the generality of a church and people in covenant with God, may be in a very dead and languishing condition as to their souls; so the breathings and influences of the Holy Spirit of God are absolutely necessary for their revival. This is the sum of what I intend from these words, *Come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.*"

In discoursing upon this doctrine, I shall,

I. Speak a little upon this deadness which is incident to a people externally in covenant with God.

II. Upon the influences or breathings of the wind of the Holy Ghost, which are so absolutely necessary in order to their revival.

III. Touch at that life which is effected by these breathings.

IV. I shall apply.

I. I say, I would *speak a little on this deadness which is incident to a people externally in covenant with God.* And here I shall only, 1. Give you some of its kinds. 2. Some of the causes of it. 3. Some of the symptoms of it.

1. The *first* thing is to give you some kinds of deadness.—Know, then, in general, that there is a two-fold death; one is proper and natural, the other is improper and metaphorical.

(1.) *Death*, properly so called, is a thing so well known, that it is needless for me to tell you what it is. There is none of us all but we shall know it experimentally within a little; for "it is appointed for every man once to die."—The grave is a house appointed for all living; and therefore, with Job, we may "say to corruption, Thou art our father; and to the worm, Thou art our mother and sister." But this is not the death I now speak of; and therefore,

(2.) There is a death which is improper or metaphorical; which is nothing else but a disease or distemper of the soul, by which it is rendered unmeet and incapable for holy and spiritual exercises. And this, again, is two-fold; either total or partial.

1*st*, There is a total death incident to the wicked and ungodly, who are stark dead, and have nothing of spiritual life in them at all. Hence, (Eph. ii. 1,) men in a state of nature are said to be "dead in trespasses and sins;" that is, under the total reigning power of sin, "in the gall of bitterness, and under the bond of iniquity;" *without God, without Christ*, and therefore *without hope*.

2*dly*, There is a partial death incident to believers, whom God has raised out of the grave of an unrenewed state, and in whose souls he has implanted a principle of spiritual life. And this partial death, incident to believers, consists in a manifest decay of spiritual principles and habits, in the abating of their wonted life and vigour, and activity in the way and work of the Lord: their faith, their love, their hope, and other graces, are all in a fainting and languishing condition; they lie dormant in the soul, like the life of the tree that lies hid in its root, without fruit or blossoms, during the winter-season. Such deadness as this we find the Lord's people in scripture frequently complaining of, particularly Is. lvi. 3: "The son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, and taken hold of his covenant," he is made to speak, saying, "The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people:" and the eunuch cries out, *I am a dry tree*, wherein there is no life or sap. It is this kind of spiritual deadness, incident to believers, that I now principally speak of. The leaves of his profession may in a great measure be withered; the candle of his conversation may burn dimly, or with a very imperfect light; the flame of his affections, his zeal, love, desire, may, like that of a great fire, be reduced to a few coals and cinders. There may be a great intermission or formality in the discharge of commanded duty. The mind, which once with delight and admiration, could meditate upon God and Christ, and the covenant, and things that are above, may come to lose its relish for these things, and to dote upon the

transitory fading vanities of a present world. The common gifts of the Spirit, through carnal ease, and defect of employment, may be in a great measure blasted: and, which is worst of all, the saving graces, and fruits of the Spirit, may come to be wofully impaired as to their former degrees and actings. But now, this partial death of believers, again, is twofold: there is a deadness which is felt by God's people, and a deadness which is not felt; "gray hairs are here and there upon them, sometimes, and they do not behold them." The Lord was departed from Samson, *and he wist not*, Judg. xvi. 20. But then there is a deadness which is felt, when God's people have a sense of their deadness, and are lamenting it. And it is an evidence of spiritual life, or of some revival, when the Lord's people are beginning to cry out with the church, (Psal. lxxxv. 6:) "Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee?—Why hast thou hardened our heart from thy fear?" Is. lxiii. 17. But,

2. The *second* thing is, to take notice of some of the causes of this spiritual deadness. I shall only name them, because your time would not allow me to enlarge.

(1.) Then, abstinence or neglect of food, you know, will soon bring the body into a pining, languishing condition: so, if the means of grace be not diligently improved, if we neglect, by faith, to apprehend and to improve Christ, and to feed upon him, whose "flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed," the spiritual life of the soul will soon languish and wither. Hence is that [declaration] of Christ, John vi. 53: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

(2.) Surfeiting the soul with sensual pleasure is another great cause of spiritual death: Hos. iv. 11: "Whoredom and wine, and new wine take away the heart:" they suck out the very life of the soul. What is the reason why many professors of religion have lost their wonted vigour in the way of the Lord, and are in such a languishing condition as to their soul-matters? The plain reason of it is this, they are glutting themselves with the pleasures of sense. If Samson do but sleep on Delilah's lap, she will betray him into the hands of the Philistines, and cut the locks wherein his strength lies; and when he goes out to shake himself, as at other times, he will find his strength gone away from him.

(3.) Inactivity and sloth in salvation and regeneration-work is another cause of spiritual deadness. Physicians observe, that as too violent exercise, so too much rest, or a sedentary way of living, is prejudicial to the health of the body. This holds also in spiritual things: if we do not exercise ourselves unto godliness, and endeavour to abound in the work

of the Lord, the spiritual life will soon languish and dwindle away. Therefore, "Let us not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; and whatever our hand findeth to do, let us do it with all our might." And beware of resting upon empty wishes and desires in spiritual matters; for "the desire of the slothful kills him, because his hands refuse to labour."

(4.) The contagion of ill example, of a carnal world, and irreligious relatives, has a fatal influence this way. You know it is exceedingly dangerous for those who have the seed of all diseases in them to frequent the company of those who are infected with the plague or pestilence. A Joseph, if he stay long in the Egyptian court, will learn to swear "by the life of Pharaoh." It is true, indeed, as fire sometimes burns with the greater vehemence, and casts the greater heat, the colder the air be; so the zeal and life of God's people is sometimes rather quickened, by beholding the wickedness of those among whom their lot is cast, as Paul among the Athenians. But if we shall adventure to cast ourselves into the society of the wicked, without a special call and warrant from Providence, it will be next to an impossibility to keep ourselves free of the contagion: for "can a man carry fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? Can a man walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt? Evil communications corrupt good manners."

(5.) Some deadly wound in the soul, not carefully noticed, may be the cause of spiritual death. You know a man may die not only by a draught of poison, or the like, but also by the cut of a sword. While we are in the wilderness, we live in the very midst of our spiritual enemies: the fiery darts of Satan are flying thick about us; he is always seeking to bruise the believer's heel, "going about seeking to devour:" and not only so, but our own lusts also do war against the soul, so that we cannot miss to be wounded thereby. And if the filth and guilt of these wounds be not carefully washed away by the blood and Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, they cannot miss exceedingly to impair the spiritual life and health: therefore, David, after he had been wounded by murder and adultery, is so earnest that God would wash and cleanse his wounds, and purge him with hyssop, that so the joy of his salvation might be restored. But then,

(6.) A holy God has sometimes a righteous and holy hand in this spiritual death, to which the Lord's people are liable, by withdrawing and suspending the influences of his Spirit from them. For as the plant and the herb of the field wither, and languish when the rain of heaven is withheld; so when the influences of the Holy Ghost are suspended, the

very sap of the soul, and its spiritual life go away. And the Lord withholds the influences of his Spirit for many reasons, As,

1*st*, He does it sometimes in a way of awful and adorable sovereignty, to show that he is not a debtor to any of his creatures. However, because the Spirit's influences are seldom withdrawn in a way of sovereignty, it is our part to search and try if conscience do not condemn us, as having a sinful and culpable hand in it ourselves.

2*dly*, Sometimes he does it to humble his people, and to prevent their pride, which makes him to "behold them afar off." If we were always under the lively gales and influences of the Spirit, we would be ready to forget ourselves, and in danger with Paul, of being lifted up above measure, when he was wrapt up into the third heaven. Upon this account, some of the saints have said, that they have got more good sometimes by their desertion, than by their enlargement.

3*dly*, He does it to make them prize Christ, and see their continual need of fresh supplies "out of his fulness." He lets our cisterns run dry, that we may come anew, and lay our empty vessels under the flowings of the blessed "fountain of life," that "out of his fulness we may receive, and grace for grace."

4*thly*, He does it sometimes for the trial of his people, to see if they will follow him "in a wilderness, in a land that is not sown," as well as when he is feeding them with the sensible communications of his grace and Spirit; to see if they will live on him by faith, when they cannot live by sight or sense.

5*thly*, Sometimes he does it for their chastisement, to correct them for their iniquities. And this, indeed, is the most ordinary cause why the Spirit of the Lord is suspended and withdrawn.

I have not time to enumerate many of these sins which provoke the Lord to withdraw his Spirit. I shall only mention two or three.

(1.) Not hearkening to the motions of his Spirit, is one great reason why the Lord withdraws his Spirit; as you see in the spouse, Cant. v. There Christ comes, and moves, and calls for entrance: the spouse does not hearken to the motion: "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" Upon which he immediately withdraws and leaves her, as you may read at your own leisure.

(2.) Lukewarmness and formality in the discharge of duty is another cause of it, as we see in the church of Laodicea; it made him to spew that church out of his mouth. And then,

(3.) Prostituting the gifts and graces of the Spirit to carnal, selfish, and base ends, to procure a name, or make a show in the world. This is another reason of it.

(4.) Sinning against light, trampling upon the belly of conscience, as David no doubt did in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba; whereby he provoked the Lord so far to leave him, that he cries out, (Psal. li. 11:) "Cast me not out of thy sight; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

(5.) Barrenness and unfruitfulness under the means of grace: Is. v. the clouds are commanded to give no rain upon the barren vineyard. And then,

(6.) And *lastly*, Their not listening carefully to the voice of God in ordinances and providences; this is another cause of it; Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12: "My people would not hearken to my voice; therefore, I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels." And thus you have some of the causes of this spiritual deadness. I come to—

3. The *third* thing, which was to give you some of the symptoms of it: and would to God they were not too visible, rife, and common in the day, and upon the generation in which we live. I shall name a few of them to you.

(1.) Want of appetite after the bread and water of life is a symptom of spiritual death. You know *that* man cannot be in a healthful condition that loathes his food, or has lost his appetite after it. Alas! is not the manna of heaven, that God is raining about our tent-doors, generally loathed? The great truths of God, which some of the saints have found to be "sweeter than honey, from the honey-comb," have not that savour and relish with us that they ought to have. Are not sabbaths, sacraments, sermons, fast-days, and feast-days, burdens to many among us; so that if they would but speak out the language of their hearts, they would be ready to join issue with these, Mal. i. 13: "What a weariness is this?" Whereas, the soul that is in a lively condition is ready to say of the word, "It is better to me than thousands of gold and silver; I esteem it more than my necessary food:" and of ordinances, "I love the habitation of thy house, and the place where thy honour dwelleth;" and Psal. lxxxiv. 10: "One day in thy courts is better than a thousand."

(2.) Though a man have something of an appetite, yet if he do not grow, or look like his food, it looks something dangerous and death-like. The thriving Christian is a growing Christian: "They that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.—The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." But, alas! is it not quite otherwise

with the most part? Many are going backward, instead of forward; as it is said of Jerusalem; (Lam. i. 8:) "She sigheth, and turneth backward." May we not cry out of our leanness, our leanness, notwithstanding of all the fattening means and ordinances that we enjoy?

(3.) You know, when death takes a dealing with a person, it makes his beauty to fade: "When with rebukes thou dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." Pale death soon alters the ruddy countenance. Perhaps the day has been, O believer, when the beauty of holiness adorned every step of thy conversation; thy "light did so shine before men, that they, seeing thy good works," could not but "glorify thy heavenly Father;" but now, alas! the beauty of thy conversation is sullied and stained, by "lying among the pots" of sin. This says, that spiritual death is dealing with thy soul.

(4.) Death not only wastes the beauty, but the strength also: Eccl. xii. 3: "The keepers of the house do tremble, and the strong men do bow," upon the approaches of the king of terrors. Now, see if your wonted strength and ability to perform duty, or to resist temptations, be not abated. Perhaps the day has been, when thou couldst have said with Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? for, through Christ strengthening me, I can do all things;" but now thou art ready to faint and sit up at the very thoughts of duty. The day perhaps has been, when, though Satan, that cunning archer, did shoot sore at thee; yet "thy bow did abide in its strength, and the arms of thy hands were made strong by the mighty God of Jacob;" thou wast in case to beat back the fiery darts of Satan, and to stand thy ground against the corruptions and defections of the day and generation: but now, like a dead fish, thou art carried down the stream. Does not this proclaim thy soul to be under a sad decay?

(5.) Death wastes the natural heat and warmness of the body. There is a kind of chilliness and coldness that seizes a man when death takes a dealing with him. So it is a sign of a spiritual decay and deadness, when wonted zeal for God and his glory, and the concerns of his church and his kingdom, is abated. Perhaps the day has been, when, with David, the zeal of God's house did in a manner eat you up, and you "preferred Jersualem to your chief joy:" but now you are almost come the length of Gallio's temper, to "care for none of these things;" indifferent whether the work of God in the land sink or swim. Laodicea's distemper is too prevalent among us at this day: we are "neither cold nor hot" in the things of God; and therefore have reason to fear, lest we be spewed out of God's mouth. The day has been, when

your spirits were lifted up, in prayer, in hearing, in communicating; you were "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" you could rejoice to work righteousness, and say, in some measure, with David, "I will go unto the altar of God, to God, my exceeding joy;" but now all this holy warmth is gone in a great measure; you are become formal and careless in the concerns of God's glory.

(6.) A dead man, you know, cannot move, but only as he is moved from without, in regard he wants a principle of motion within. So it is a sign of spiritual death, even in believers, when external motives and considerations have a greater influence in the duties of religion upon them, than an internal principle of faith and love. When the believer is himself, "the love of Christ constrains" him in every duty; this is the "one thing" he desires, "that he may behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple:" but when any selfish or external motive sets him at work, it is a sign of spiritual death. Other things might be added; but I hasten to speak to,

II. The *second* thing proposed in the method, and that was, to *speak a little of these breathings and influences of the Spirit of God, which are absolutely necessary for the revival of the Lord's people under deadness: Come from the four winds, O breath! and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.* And here I would, 1. Clear the nature of these influences, in a word or two. 2. Speak to the variety of these influences, *four winds.* 3. To the manner of their operation upon the elect; they are said to *breathe upon the slain.* 4. Speak a little to the necessity of these breathings. 5. To the several seasons of the Spirit's reviving influences.

I fear your time will cut me short before I have done; but I shall run through these particulars as quickly as possible.

1. The *first* thing is, to clear the nature of these breathings or influences. And what I have to offer upon this head, you may take in these few propositions:—

(1.) You would know, that the influences and gifts of the Spirit of God are of two sorts, either common or saving. As for the common influences of the Spirit, which are sometimes bestowed upon the wicked and reprobate world, I am not to speak of these at this time. All I shall say about them is, to tell you, that they are given in common to the children of men, "for edification of the *mystical* body of Christ," until it arrive at "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," as you read, Eph. iv.: and therefore they are commonly called by divines *dona ministrantia*, or *ministering gifts.* Although they have no saving efficacy upon the person in whom they dwell; yet God, in his holy wisdom, makes use of them for

the good of his church in general, as we read, Eph. iv. And another thing that I would tell you, likewise, concerning these common influences, is, that they are of an exceedingly dangerous nature, when they are not accompanied with saving grace. The man that has them, is like a ship having very large sails, and but little or no ballast at all, in the midst of the ocean; and is therefore in danger of being split in pieces against every rock. In Matth. vii. 22, we read of some who had extraordinary common gifts; they prophesied in Christ's name, wrought miracles, and cast out devils in his name, and did many wonderful works, and yet Christ utterly disowns them. I do not speak of these common influences now, but of such as are saving. And therefore,

(2.) A *second* proposition is, that the Holy Spirit of God, considered in his particular economy in the work of redemption, as the applier of the Redeemer's purchase, is the author and efficient cause of all saving influences. It is he, I say, that prepares and disposes the soul of man for the entertainment of the things of God, which are not received nor discerned by the natural mind. It is he that ploughs up the fallow ground of the heart, and brings in the wilderness, and turns it into a fruitful field. It is he that garnishes the face of the soul with the saving graces of the Spirit; these are flowers of the upper paradise, therefore called "the fruits of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22. It is he that preserves, cherishes, and maintains, them by renewed influences: he cherishes the smoking flax, and at last turns it into a lamp of glory in heaven; for "he brings forth judgment unto victory."

(3.) Again; you would know that the elect of God are the subjects recipient of all saving influences of the Spirit of God: I say, they are peculiar only to the elect of God, and to them only upon their conversion, when they come to be united to Christ, as members of his mystical body. We must be ingrafted into this true olive, otherwise we can never partake of his sap, and "receive out of his fulness, grace for grace." That these influences are peculiar to the elect of God, is plain from Tit. i. 1; where we read of "the faith of God's elect."

(4.) These influences of the Spirit, are given for various ends to the elect of God. The judicious Dr. Owen, in his *Discourses on the Spirit*, observes, that these saving influences are given to the elect of God for regeneration, to the regenerate for sanctification, to the sanctified for consolation, and to the comforted Christian for farther up-building, and edification, and establishment, until they arrive at perfection in glory. But the nature of these influences will farther appear from,

2. The *second* thing proposed, which was, to speak a little

to the variety of these influences of the Spirit. You see they are diversified here, while they are called *four winds: Come from the four winds, O breath.* The apostle tells us, that "there are diversities of gifts and operations, but the same Spirit," 1 Cor. xi. 4. And we read, as I was telling you, of "seven Spirits that are before the throne," Rev. i. Here, if time would allow me to enlarge, I might tell you, that the saving influences and breathings of the Spirit are either primary, fundamental, and absolutely necessary to salvation; or they are accumulative, additional, necessary only for the believer's comfort and well-being. Some of these influences are antecedent, or preparative unto conversion; some of them are regenerating, and others are subsequent and posterior unto regeneration. But I shall not stand upon such nice distinctions. You may take a few of them in the order following:—

(1.) There are the convincing influences of the Spirit: John xvi. 8: "When he is come, he will convince the world of sin." This is what I conceive we are to understand by the "north wind," (Cant. iv. 16;) which is commonly boisterous, cold, chill and nipping. The elect of God by nature lie fast asleep within the sea-mark of God's wrath, upon the very brink of everlasting ruin, crying, "Peace, peace," to themselves; the Spirit of the Lord comes like a stormy north wind, blows hard upon the sinner's face, and awakens him; breaks his carnal peace and security, brings him to himself, and lets him see his danger; fills him with remorse and terror. Hence, (Isa. xxviii. 17,) the hail is said to "sweep down the refuge of lies," before the sinner come to settle upon the "foundation that God hath laid in Zion." In Acts ii. 37, it is said, "they were pricked in their heart;" and then they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

(2.) There are the enlightening influences and breathings of the Spirit. Hence, he is compared to *eye-salve*, Rev. iii. 18: "Ye have received an unction from the Holy One, whereby ye know all things," 1 John ii. 20. We read, Is. xxv. 7, of a "veil and face of a covering that is spread over all nations." The wind of the Holy Ghost must blow off this veil of ignorance and unbelief; and then the poor sinner comes to see a new world of wonders that he never saw before; a wonderful great God, a wonderful Redeemer, a wonderful covenant, and a wonderful holy law. Hence, we are said to be "translated out of darkness into a marvellous light. The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God." And, 1 Cor. ii. 12: "By the Spirit we know the things that are freely given to us of God."

(3.) There are the renewing influences of the Spirit. We

are said to be "saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. iii. 5. Hence, he is called "a new Spirit." He renews the will, and "makes old things to pass away, and all things to become new."

(4.) There are the comforting influences of the Spirit. This is the *south-wind*, as it were, gentle and easy, and refreshing; and therefore he is called *the Comforter*. And, indeed, his consolations are strong consolations; they put more gladness into the heart than corn, wine, and oil in abundance; fill the soul with a joy that is "unspeakable, and full of glory." And then,

(5.) There are the corroborating and strengthening influences of the Spirit. By the breathings of the Spirit the feeble are made "like David, and as the angel of God before him." It is he that "gives power to the faint, and increases strength to them that have no might." It is by him that *worm Jacob* is made to "thresh the mountains, and to beat them small, and to make the hills as chaff." And then,

(6.) There are the drawing and enlarging influences of the Spirit: "Draw me," (says the spouse,) "we will run after thee." The poor believer lies many times, as it were, wind-bound, that he is not able to move one step in the way of the Lord: but, O! when the Spirit of the Lord comes, then come liberty and enlargement: "I will run the way of thy commandments," (says David,) "when thou hast enlarged my heart;" to wit, by the influences of thy Spirit. He is like oil to their chariot-wheels; and when he comes, they are as the *chariots of Amminadib*, or *a willing people*.

(7.) There are the sin-mortifying and sin-killing influences of the Spirit: "We, through the Spirit," are said to "mortify the deeds of the body, that so we may live." When this wind of the Holy Ghost blows upon the soul, he not only makes the spices to revive, but he kills the weeds of sin and corruption, making them to wither and decay; so that the poor believer, who was crying, "Wretched man, what shall I do to be delivered from this body of death!" is made sometimes to tread upon the necks of these enemies, as a pledge of his complete victory at last. And then,

(8.) There are the interceding influences of the Spirit: Rom. viii. 26: "The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." He intercedes in a physical and efficient way. He makes us to wrestle and pray; therefore he is called "the Spirit of grace and supplications," Zech. xii. 10. He fills the believer's heart and mouth with such a heavenly rhetoric, that God is not able to withstand it. Hence Jacob "had power with the angel, and prevailed;" for "he wept, and made supplication unto him." And then,

(9.) There are the sealing and witnessing influences of the Spirit: He "witnesseth with our spirits, that we are the sons of God." He bears witness of the glorious fulness and suitableness of Christ to the soul: "The Spirit shall testify of me," John xv. 26. And he is said to "seal believers to the day of redemption;" and his seal is the earnest of glory: Eph. i. 13, 14: "Ye are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the inheritance." But these things I have not time to insist upon. So much for the *second* thing.

3. The *third* thing that I proposed here, was, to speak a little to the manner of the acting or operation of these influences, or how it is that this wind blows upon the soul? I answer,

(1.) The wind of the Holy Ghost blows very freely; the Spirit acts as an independent sovereign, John iii. 8. It does not stay for the command, nor stop for the prohibition of any creature. So the breathings of the Spirit are sovereignly free as to the time of their donation, free as to their duration and continuance, free as to the measure, and free as to the manner of their working. And then,

(2.) He breathes on the soul sometimes very surprisingly: "Or ever I was aware (says the spouse,) my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." Canst thou not seal this in thy experience, believer, that sometimes, when thou hast gone to duty in a very heartless and lifeless condition, perhaps beginning to raze foundations, and to say with Zion, "The Lord hath forsaken, and my God hath forgotten," a gale from heaven has in a manner surprised thee, and set thee upon the high places of Jacob, and made thee to cry with the spouse, "It is the voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills? —His anger endureth but for a moment: in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

(3.) These breathings and influences of the Spirit are sometimes very piercing and penetrating. The cold nipping north wind, you know, goes to the very quick. The sword of the Spirit "pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Wind, you know, is of a very seeking, penetrating nature; it seeks through the closest chambers. So the Spirit, which is the candle of the Lord, "searcheth the lower parts of the belly:" he makes a discovery of these lusts and idols that skulk in the secret chambers of the heart.

(4.) The breathings of this wind are very powerful, strong, and efficacious. Who can oppose the blowings of the winds? Some winds have such a mighty force with them, that they

bear down, overturn, and overthrow every thing that stands in their way. So the Spirit of the Lord sometimes, especially at first conversion, breaks in upon the soul like the *rushing of a mighty wind*, as he did upon the apostles, breaking down the strong holds of iniquity, casting to the ground every high thought and towering imagination of the soul, that exalts itself against Christ, with a powerful and triumphant efficacy. He masters the darkness of the mind, the contumacy and rebellion of the will, and the carnality of the affections: the enmity of the heart against God, and all the spiritual wickednesses that are in the high places of the soul, are made to fall down at his feet, as Dagon did before the ark of the Lord.

(5.) Although he act thus powerfully and irresistibly, yet it is with an overcoming sweetness, so as there is not the least violence offered to any of the natural faculties of the soul: for whenever the Spirit comes with his saving influences, he sweetly overcomes the darkness of the mind; the sinner becomes a volunteer, and content to enlist himself a soldier under Christ's banner: Psal. cx. 3: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." No sooner does Christ by his Spirit say to the soul, "Follow me," but immediately they arise and follow him. "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." Then,

(6.) There is something in the breathing of this wind that is incomprehensible by reason: John iii. 8: "Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goes," says Christ: "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." There is something in the operation of the eternal Spirit and his influences beyond the reach, not only of natural, but of sanctified reason. Who can tell "how the bones are formed in the womb of her that is with child?" so, far less can we tell how the Spirit forms the babe of grace in the heart; how he preserves, maintains, and cherishes "the smoking flax," that is not quite extinguished. We may, in this case, apply the words of the psalmist in another case, and say, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known;" and that of the apostle, "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

(7.) These influences of the Spirit, are sometimes felt before they are seen; as you know a man will feel the wind, and hear it, when he cannot see it. So it is with the Lord's people many times, on whom the Spirit breathes: they feel his actings, they are sensible that he has been dealing with them; and all that they can say about it is, with the man that was born blind, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." "The kingdom of heaven comes not with observation."

4. The *fourth* thing proposed was, to speak a little to the necessity of these breathings. And here I shall show, 1. That they are necessary. 2. To what things they are necessary.

(1.) That they are necessary, will appear,

1*st*, From the express declaration of Christ, John xv. 5: "Without me, ye can do nothing;" that is, without the aid and influences of my Spirit. He does not say, Without me, ye cannot do many things, or great things; but, "Without me, ye can do nothing."

2*dly*, It is evident from the express acknowledgment of the saints of God upon this head: 2 Cor. iii. 5: "We are not," says the apostle, "sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God." It is he that must "work all our works in us and for us."

3*dly*, It is plain from the earnest prayers of the saints for the breathings of this wind: Cant. iv. 16: "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; and blow upon my garden." Psal. lxxxv. 6: "Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee?" They are promised in the covenant, and therefore necessary: Is. xliv. 3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed," &c. Ezek. xxxvi. 27: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Now, there is not a mercy promised in the covenant that can be wanting. But,

(2.) To what are these breathings necessary? I answer, they are necessary,

1*st*, To the quickening of the elect of God, when they are stark dead in trespasses and sins. Can ever the dry bones live, unless this omnipotent wind blow upon them? It is strange, to hear some men that profess Christianity, talking of the power of their own wills to quicken and convert themselves. They may as well say, that a dead man may take his grave in his two arms, and lay death by him, and walk. "No man," says Christ, "can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." Oh! what a dead weight is the sinner, that a whole Trinity must draw! for both Father and Son draws the sinner by the breathings of the Holy Ghost.

2*dly*, These influences are necessary for the suitable discharge of every duty of religion. You cannot read, you cannot hear, you cannot pray or praise, you cannot communicate to any advantage, unless the wind of the Holy Ghost blow upon you. It is the Lord that must enlarge our steps under us, and make your feet like hinds' feet in the ways of the Lord.

3*dly*, They are necessary for accomplishing our spiritual warfare against sin, Satan, and the world. We will never be able to combat with our spiritual enemies, if he do not help

us: it is he only that must "teach our hands to war, and our fingers to fight, so as bows of steel may be broken in pieces by us." Without the Spirit, we will fall before every temptation; like Peter, curse and swear, that we never knew him.

4*thly*, They are necessary to the exercise of grace already implanted in the soul. As we cannot work grace in our hearts, so neither can we exercise it without the renewed influences of the Holy Ghost, Cant. iv. 16: When this wind blows, then, and never till then, do the spices flow out. But I shall not stand on this: the Spirit's influences are necessary to all the uses mentioned upon the second head: for conviction, illumination, renovation, consolation, enlargement, mortification of sin, for assurance of our adoption.

5. The *fifth* thing that I proposed upon this head, was, to give you some of the seasons of these influences of the Spirit: for the wind, you know, has its seasons and times of blowing and breathing. I shall only name a few of them to you.

(1.) The Spirit's reviving influences blow, very ordinarily, in a day of conversion. This, as you were hearing, is a season when this wind breathes on the soul, Ezek. xxxvi. 26: when God "takes away the stony heart, and gives the heart of flesh." He puts his Spirit within them, when the soul is first espoused unto Christ. So Jer. ii. 2: "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown."

(2.) When the soul has been deeply humbled under a sense of sin and unworthiness. When Ephraim is brought low, and is smiting on his thigh, acknowledging his sin and folly, then the Spirit of the Lord comes with a reviving gale upon his spirit. "Is Ephraim," says the Lord, "my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

(3.) After a dark night of desertion, when the Lord returns again, it is a time of sweet influences. After Zion had been crying, "The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me;" upon the back of it comes a sweet gale of the Spirit, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee."

(4.) Times of earnest prayer and wrestling; for he gives his Spirit to them that ask it. This is agreeable to the promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

(5.) Times of serious meditation are times of sweet influences of the Spirit: Psal. lxiii. 5, 6, 8: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches, my

soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my soul followeth hard after thee."

(6.) Communion-days are sometimes days of sweet influences. Some of the Lord's people can attest it from their experience, with the spouse, that "while the King sat at his table, the spikenard sent forth the smell thereof;" and when they "sat down under his shadow, they found his fruit sweet to their taste. He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love."

(7.) The day of death has sometimes been found to be a day of such pleasant gales of the Spirit, that they have been made to enter into the haven of glory with the triumphant song in their mouth, saying, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus David, "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." Thus, Simeon, thus Paul, &c.

III. The *third* thing in the text and doctrine to be spoken to, is *the life that is effected and wrought in the souls of God's elect by these influences and breathings of the Holy Spirit.* Your time will not allow me to enlarge upon this. I shall only tell you, in a few particulars, what sort of a life it is.

(1.) It is a life of faith. The apostle calls it so, Gal. ii. 20. "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And the just is said to *live by faith.* The man is ever embracing a Redeemer, and the fulness of the Godhead in him; always deriving fresh supplies out of that full treasury and storehouse.

(2.) It is a life of justification. The law pronounces a curse against every one that "doth not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them." The believer gets this sentence of death cancelled: Rom. viii. 1: "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And not only so, but he has the everlasting righteousness of Immanuel God-man imputed to him: so that with a holy boldness he may challenge justice, and challenge the law, what they have to say against him, as the apostle does, Rom. viii. 33: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" &c.

(3.) It is a life of reconciliation with God; God and they are at friendship; which follows naturally on their justification: Rom. v. 1: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." God does not retain the least grudge in his heart against them; and he and they walk together, because they are agreed: that is, they have fellowship one with ano-

ther, according to that, 1 John i. 3: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

(4.) It is a life of holiness and sanctification: for the Spirit of the Lord is a cleansing, purifying, and renewing Spirit: he renews the soul after the image of God; makes the heart, that was a "cage of unclean birds," a fit temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in; he garnishes the soul, and makes it like the King's daughter, *all glorious within.* They that had lien among the pots, become "like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

(5.) It is a very lightsome and comfortable life: and no wonder; for his name is *The Comforter.* His consolations are so strong, that they furnish the soul with ground of joy in the blackest and cloudiest day: Hab. iii. 17, 18: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." And the joy that he gives is deep: "Your heart shall rejoice." And it is abiding: "Your joy shall no man take from you." And it is such as cannot be made language of: "We rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

(6.) It is a life of liberty; for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." He brings us into "the glorious liberty of the sons of God." Before the Spirit comes with his saving influences, the man is in bondage; in bondage to sin, to Satan, to the law, and to the curse and condemnation of God: but the Spirit of the Lord frees from all these. Christ, by his Spirit, sets the captives of the mighty at liberty, and "delivers the prey from the terrible."

(7.) It is a hidden life: Col. iii. 3: "Your life is hid with Christ in God." And believers are called "God's hidden ones," Psal. lxxxiii. 3: The spring and fountain of this life is hid, namely, an unseen Christ; for *with him is the fountain of life.* The subject of this life is hid, even *the hidden man of the heart.* The actings of this life are hid, and the means of its support; he feeds upon "the hidden manna, *and* the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." And then the beauty and glory of this life is hid; for "the King's daughter is all glorious within." The beauty of the hypocrite's life lies all in the outside, painted sepulchres.

(8.) It is a heavenly life; they are made to live above the world: "Our conversation is in heaven," says the apostle. They look on themselves as pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and, therefore, look not so much to the things that are seen, as to the things that are not seen. With Moses, they

"have respect unto the recompense of the reward;" their eyes are set upon the land that is very far off, and the King in his beauty.

(9.) It is a royal life: for they are "made kings and priests unto God," Rev. i. 6: They have a royal kingdom, of which they are heirs: "I appoint unto you a kingdom," says Christ; a royal crown, "a crown of glory which fadeth not away." They shall have a royal throne at last, Rev. iii. 21. Royal robes, princely attire, "the garments of salvation;" a royal table provided for them, Is. xxv. 6: "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined;" a royal guard continually attending them, the angels of God, and the attributes of the divine nature, &c.

(10.) It is an eternal life: John xvii. 3: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The saving knowledge of a God in Christ, what is it but the first dawnings of eternal glory in the soul? And where he once dawns, he is ever in the ascendant until the mid-day of glory come; for "his goings forth are prepared as the morning."

IV. The *fourth* thing is the use of the doctrine. And waving other uses that might be made of this doctrine, I shall only improve it by way of *examination* and of *exhortation*.

The *first* use shall be of *trial* and *examination*. Oh try, sirs, whether or not these saving influences of the Spirit did ever breathe upon your souls, yea, or not. For your trial I shall only suggest these few things:—

1. If these breathings have blown upon thy soul, man, woman, then he has blown away "the veil and face of the covering" that was naturally upon thy mind and understanding. He has given you other views of spiritual and divine things, than you can have by any natural or acquired knowledge. The Spirit of the Lord is called "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation," Eph. i. 17: because he reveals these things to the soul which flesh and blood is not able to receive or understand. So then, has the Spirit testified of Christ unto you? has he "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined into your heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ?" And as a fruit and consequence of this,

2. If the wind of the Holy Ghost has blown upon thy soul, he has blown away some of the filth of hell that did cleave to thy soul, and has transformed thee into his own image: 2 Cor. iii. 18: "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, thou art changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." If you have the Spirit,

the "same mind will be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:" for "he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit." You will imitate and resemble him in his imitable perfections, in his holiness, meekness, self-denial, patience. He is a holy God; and wherever he comes, he works holiness, and makes the soul holy.

3. If this wind has blown upon your souls, then it has driven you from your lying refuges, and made you take sanctuary in Christ. He has driven you from the law, and made you consent to the method of salvation through the righteousness of the Son of God: "I through the law," (says the apostle,) "am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." This is the design of all the Spirit's influences, to lead sinners off from sin, off from self, off from the law, that they may rest in Christ only.

4. If ever you felt any of the reviving gales of this wind of the Spirit, you will long for new gales and breathings of it: and when these breathings are suspended and withheld, your souls will be like to faint, as it were, like a man that wants breath. You will pant for the air of the Spirit's influences, like David, Psal. lxiii. 1: "My soul longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;" and Psal. lxxxiv. 2: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Oh for another gale of his Spirit in public ordinances!

5. If you have felt the breathings of this wind you will not snuff up the east wind of sin and vanity: John iv. 14: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." You will not thirst immoderately after things of time; no, no; you will see them to be but mere trash and vanity. You will "choose that good part which shall not be taken away from you." You will "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

6. If this wind has blown upon thy soul, then you will follow the motion of this wind: you will not run cross to this wind, but will go along with it. I mean, you will yield yourselves to the conduct of the Spirit speaking in his word; for "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

But, say you, How shall I know if I be led by the Spirit of God? I answer,

1*st*, If you follow the Spirit, then "you will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," but, on the contrary, you will study to "crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts." You will be ready to cut off your right hand, and to pluck out the right eye sins at the Lord's command.

2*dly*, Then the way wherein you walk will be a way of

holiness, for he is a Spirit of sanctification; and a way of truth; for the Spirit of the Lord is a Spirit of truth, and he leads into all truth: a way of uprightness: Psal. cxliii. 10: "Thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness."

3*dly*, You know leading imports spontaneousness and willingness. There is a great difference between leading and drawing; between being driven by the wind, and following the motion of the wind. Sometimes, indeed, the wicked, a hypocrite, a natural man, by a strong north wind of conviction, may be driven on to duty through the force of terror. But the believer is a volunteer; he freely yields himself to the Spirit's conduct; he rejoices to work righteousness, and to remember God in his ways. Whenever he hears the Spirit whispering in his ears, and saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it," presently, he complies. When the Spirit of the Lord says, "Come," he immediately echoes back again, and says, "Behold, I come unto thee; for thou art the Lord my God." Now, try yourselves by these things.

The *second* use shall be *exhortation*. Is it so, that the influences of the Spirit are so necessary in order to our revival? then be exhorted to look up to Heaven, and cry for the breathings of the Spirit. O sirs, will you turn the words of my text into a prayer; and say, "Come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live?" I might enforce this exhortation by many motives: I only name them.

Motive 1. Consider, that spiritual deadness is very prevalent in the day in which we live. There is a great multitude of "dry bones" scattered up and down our "valley of vision." There are many that carry the marks of a deadly leprosy on their foreheads: their atheism, their profanity, irreligion, and other gross abominations, plainly declare to the world, that they are "dead in trespasses and sins." And, alas! may it not be for matter of lamentation, that even many of those, who, in the judgment of charity, have "the root of the matter," the principles of spiritual life, are yet under sad decays of the life of grace? Alas! it is not with Scotland's ministers and professors as once it has been. I might produce many melancholy evidences of this, if time would allow. Remember those already mentioned, the general loathing of the word, &c.

Mot. 2. Consider the evil and danger of spiritual deadness. The evil of it will appear,

1*st*, If you consider that it is a frame of spirit directly contrary to the command of God. God commands us to "present ourselves a living sacrifice unto him:" and, indeed, this "is our reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1. Yea, it is contrary to the very nature of God; for God is a Spirit; and they that

worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth," 1 John iv. 24.

2dly, The evil and danger of it appears farther from this; that it unfits the soul for every duty, and mars our communion and fellowship with God. God meets the lively Christian in the way of duty: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways." But, for the man that comes to him with a Laodicean, dead, lifeless, and lukewarm frame of soul, he will not hold communion with that man; no, he "will spew him out of his mouth."

3dly, It opens a door for all other sins, and renders a man an easy prey to every temptation. A dead man can make no manner of resistance; he is carried down the stream without opposition. Then,

4thly, It lays a foundation for sad and terrible challenges from conscience. David's spiritual deadness brought him to that pass, in the end, that he is made to cry out of broken bones, &c.

Mot. 3. Consider, that as the breathings of the Spirit are necessary for every duty, so particularly for that solemn work which you have before your hands of commemorating the death of the exalted Redeemer. I might here let you see, how the influences of the Spirit are necessary for every part of your work, if time would allow. Without the Spirit's influences of light, you can never examine yourselves to purpose: it is "the Spirit of the Almighty that giveth understanding" how to search out "the mystery of iniquity" in the heart, which is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." And then, without the Spirit you cannot mourn for sin; for it is the kindly influences of the Spirit that thaws the heart into evangelical tears, Zech. xii. 10. Without the Spirit you cannot discern the broken body of a Redeemer; for it is the Spirit that testifies of Christ. "I will pour the Spirit of grace upon the house of David, and inhabitants of Jerusalem;" and then follows, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." In a word, you cannot exercise any grace, you cannot wrestle in prayer, you cannot have any right view of the contrivance of redemption, you cannot "take hold of God's covenant," or improve any promise of the covenant, without the Spirit.

Mot. 4. Consider the excellency of these influences of the Spirit.

1*st*, They blow from an excellent quarter and original: the Holy Ghost is the author of them; and you know he "proceeds from the Father and the Son." So that a whole Trinity, as it were, convey themselves with these breathings.

2dly, They are the purchase of a Redeemer's blood, and

therefore excellent. There is not the least grace, or the least gale of the Spirit, that is given to believers, but it cost Christ the blood of his heart. He purchased grace as well as glory.

3*dly*, These influences of the Spirit, as it were, supply Christ's room while he is in glory. And truly, sirs, I may safely say it upon scripture-warrant, that the presence of the Spirit with believers upon earth, is a greater blessing than the mere bodily presence of Christ: and, therefore, Christ tells his disciples by way of comfort, (John xvi. 7:) "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." As if he had said, "When I am gone, the Spirit will be poured out from on high, which is far better for you than my bodily presence."

4*thly*, These breathings of the Spirit are pledges of glory, the earnest-penny of the inheritance: Eph. i. 13, 14: "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance."

5*thly*, Their excellency appears from the excellent effects that they produce upon the soul. They beautify the soul on whom they fall, and make it like "a field which the Lord hath blessed." They render the soul "fruitful in every good word and work:" Hos. xiv. 5: "I will be as the dew unto Israel:" and what follows? "he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Is. xliv. 3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring;" and then follows, (ver. 4,) "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses."

Quest. What advice or counsel do you give, in order to our obtaining or recovering the enlightening and reviving gales of the Spirit?

Ans. 1. Be sensible of your deadness, and mourn over it; for the Lord "comforts them that mourn in Zion." He will "give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness:" and then follows, "They shall be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified," Is. lxi. 2, 3.

2. Be much upon the mount of divine meditation; for here it is that the Spirit of the Lord breathes: "While I was musing the fire burned," says David, Psal. xxxix. 3; Psal. lxiii. 5, 6: "When I meditate on thee in the night-watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness."

3. Cry mightily to God for these influences, that he would pour down his Spirit from on high: for "if ye, being evil," says Christ, "know how to give good gifts unto your chil-

dren; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 13. Plead the promises of the new covenant; and, particularly, be much in pleading this absolute promise of the Spirit, Is. xliv. 3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed," &c. Ezek. xxxvi. 27: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." But still remember, that these promises are to be managed by the prayer of faith. We are to turn God's promises into prayers; for it is added, (ver. 37,) "For these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

4. Make conscience of waiting on him in all the duties and ordinances of his appointment, particularly the preaching of the word. And beware of a legal frame of spirit in your attending upon these ordinances, as if thereby you could merit any thing at God's hand, or as if God were obliged to you for what you do this way; for "we receive the Spirit," (says the apostle,) "not by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith." Gospel ordinances are the usual chariots in which the Spirit rides, when he makes his entrance at first, or when he returns into the soul after absence.

5. *Lastly*, Study to have union with Christ; for it is upon them that are in Christ, that "the Spirit of God and of glory" rests: "He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit" with him. "The oil of gladness," that was poured upon the head of our exalted Aaron, runs down upon the skirts of his garments, upon every member of his mystical body.

SERMON IV.

THE KING HELD IN THE GALLERIES.*

The King is held in the galleries.—Cant. vii. 5.

Our blessed Lord Jesus, who is represented under the notion of a Bridegroom in this book, from the fourth verse of the preceding chapter, breaks out in commendation of his

* Preached on Sabbath evening, immediately after the celebration of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, June 2, 1717.

spouse and bride, venting the love of his heart toward her in many warm and pathetic expressions; and his discourse is continued to the 10th verse of this chapter; where we find him running out in commendation of his church in several particulars. He commends her from her spiritual birth and pedigree, calling her *a prince's daughter*, ver. 1. The saints of God are royally descended; by their second birth they are sprung of "the Ancient of days;" "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Again; he commends her for the beauty of holiness shining in her walk and conversation: "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!" Holiness is the attire of the bride of Christ; "She is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints." But time will not allow me to explain the several particulars of her commendation. The words of my text are an abrupt sentence; in which he expresses the wonderful complacency which he took in her society, and the overpowering influence that her faith and his faithfulness, his love, and her loveliness, had to make him stay and abide in her company: *The King is held in the galleries.* In which words we may notice these particulars:—

1. Christ's character and office; he is a person of royal dignity, no less than a king, and *the King* by way of eminency. The church of God owns no other king but Christ; for it is he whom God the Father has *set* to rule *upon the holy hill of Zion:* and it is a manifest invasion of Christ's prerogative, for pope, prelate, or potentate, to usurp a sovereignty and headship over the church of Christ; an indignity which he will not suffer to pass without suitable resentment. He here owns himself to be the King of Zion, and will maintain the dignity of his crown against all that dare invade it. 2. In the words we have the place of converse between Christ and his blessed spouse and bride; it is in *the galleries.* It is the same word in the original which we have, Cant. i. 17: "The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters, or galleries, of fir." Where, by *galleries*, in both places, according to the judicious Durham, we are to understand the ordinances of the gospel, in which Christ and his people do tryst and keep company one with another. Why gospel ordinances are thus designed, I may show more particularly afterwards. 3. We have the sweet constraint that this royal Bridegroom was under to tarry in the galleries with his spouse: he here owns that he was *held*, or *bound*, as the word signifies, *in the galleries.* Her faith and love laid him under a voluntary arrest to tarry with her; like the disciples going to Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 29: "She constrained him to abide with her." An expression much like

this we have, Cant. iii. 4. After a weary night of desertion, and much tedious inquiry, she at length meets her beloved, and thereupon she cries out, "I held him, and would not let him go."

Observe, "That Christ, the blessed King of Zion, condescends sometimes to be held and detained by his people in the galleries of gospel ordinances. *The King is held in the galleries.*"

I. I will give some account of this royal King.

II. Of the galleries of the King.

III. Of this holding of the King in the galleries.

IV. Apply.

I. The *first* thing proposed is, to *give some account of this royal King*. But alas! "Who can declare his generation?" All I shall do, is only, 1. To prove that he is a King. 2. That he is *the King* by way of eminence and excellence.

First, That he is a King, appears from these particulars:—

1. From the Father's designation and ordination. From all eternity the Father designed and ordained this dignity for him as our Mediator: for I do not now speak of his natural and essential, but of his dispensatory or mediatory kingdom: "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion," Psal. ii. 6; and Psal. lxxxix. 27: "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth."

2. It appears from the prophecies that went of him before his actual manifestation in our nature. It was prophesied that the sceptre of Judah should terminate in him, Gen. xlix. 10; that he should succeed David, and sit upon the throne, Luke i. 32, 33, compared with Psal. cxxxii. 11: "The Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end;" Is. ix. 6; and "the government shall be upon his shoulder."

3. It appears from the types and shadows that prefigured him. He was typified by Melchizedek, who is called "the King of righteousness, *and* the King of peace." He was typified by David, and frequently called by the name of David in the psalms and prophets: Hos. iii. 5: "The children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king." He was typified by Solomon, and by his name he is commonly called in this book of the Song.

4. It appears from the princely titles that are given him in scripture. He is called "the Prince of peace, the King of righteousness, *and* the King of kings and Lords of lords;" and it is God the Father's will, that "every one should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord."

5. It appears from the princely prerogatives and royalties that are assigned him by his Father. He has anointed him

to be King with an incomparable oil, even "with the oil of gladness; I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him," Psal. lxxxix. 20. He has installed him in the government with the solemnity of an open proclamation from heaven, by "the voice which came from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." He has put a sceptre of righteousness, and a rod of iron, in his hand, by which he is enabled to defend his subjects, destroy his enemies, and "break them in pieces as a potter's vessel." He has given him ambassadors to negotiate the affairs of his kingdom: "He gave some, apostles: and some, prophets: and some, evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." He has given him vast territories, even "the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession: his dominion *reaches* from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." It extends not only to the outward, but likewise to the inward man. He has a legislative authority, he can make and explain, and abrogate laws at his pleasure. And when his laws are broken, he has the power of acquitting or condemning committed to him: "For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Thus, you see he is a King.

Secondly, As he is a King, so he is *the King* by way of eminence and excellence. And this will be abundantly clear, if we consider,

1. That he is *the King eternal*, 1 Tim. i. 17: "the everlasting Father," or, "the Father of eternity," Is. ix. 6. Other kings are but of yesterday, mere upstarts, and, like a gourd, their glory withers in a night. But here is a King that is "from everlasting to everlasting," the true "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending." Mic. v. 2. This "ruler in Israel, his goings forth were from of old, from everlasting." And his throne is so firmly established, that it shall stand through all periods of time, yea, through the endless years of eternity: Psal. xlv. 6: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."

2. He is called *the King immortal*, 1 Tim. i. 17. In the last chapter of the same epistle, "He only hath immortality." The potentates of the earth are but kings of clay; they and their thrones have their "foundations in the dust, and to dust they shall return." Death, the king of terrors, has raised his trophies of victory over the most renowned potentates: they who made the world to tremble with their sword, have been at last vanquished by death. But here is a King that never dies. It is true, death did once, by his own consent,

obtain a seeming victory over him; but in that victory *death* itself was *plagued*, and the *grave destroyed*, Hos. xiii. 14. Yea, "it was not possible that he should be held in the bonds of death:" no, he vanquished death in his own territories, and returned carrying the spoil of his enemy along with him, making open proclamation of the victory which he had gained to all his friends for their encouragement: Rev. i. 18: "I am he that was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death."

3. He is *the King invisible.* Some eastern princes were seldom seen by their subjects, to beget the greater reverence and estimation among their subjects. But this was only an affectation of grandeur. Christ, the King of Zion, is indeed visible to the eye of faith by the saints militant, and visible to the eye of sense by the saints triumphant; however, the thousand thousandth part of his divine glory can never be seen or searched out by any created understanding; for "he dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see," 1 Tim. vi. 16. He is an unseen and unknown Christ by the greatest part of the world, as to his worth and excellency. And as to his corporeal presence, he is invisible by us in this state of mortality: for *the heaven must* contain *him*, "until the times of restitution of all things;" and then, indeed, "every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him."

4. He is *the only blessed and happy King*, 1 Tim. vi. 15: "the blessed and only Potentate." The crowns of other princes have their thorns, which make them to sit uneasy upon their heads; and the toil and trouble of government is sometimes so great, that the very beggar on the dunghill is happier in some respects than the king upon the throne. But Zion's King is in every respect happy and blessed. He is the darling of heaven and earth, the delight of his Father, and "the Desire of all nations." His crown does not totter, his subjects do not rebel; he is happy in them, and they in him: "Men shall be blessed in him; and all nations shall call him blessed."

5. He is *the absolute and universal King.* His kingdom is universal in respect of all persons; the highest potentate, as well as the meanest beggar, are the subjects of his empire. This is his royal "name written on his vesture, and on his thigh, the King of kings, and Lord of lords," Rev. xix. 16. Whenever he will, he casts the mighty out of their seats, and advances them of low degree; sets the beggar on the throne, and causes the king to sit on the dunghill: "He cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth." Again; his government is universal in respect of all places.

We read of several potentates who have grasped at universal monarchy: but never any of them attained it, though, indeed, they extended their dominions far and wide. But here is a King whose empire reaches to heaven, earth, and hell. Again; it is universal in respect of all times: "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

I might tell you farther, to illustrate the eminency of this King, that he is the *King of glory*, the *almighty King*, the *King of saints*, the *King of nations*. But from what has been said, we may see that he is a King of incomparable excellence, and what an honour it is to be with him, and to hold him in the galleries. But I go on to,

II. The *second* thing proposed, which was to *speak a little of the galleries in which this royal King trysts and keeps company with his people*. We read, Song i. 4, of *the chambers of the King;* and, chap. ii. 4, of *the King's banqueting-house*, or *cellars of wine*, into which the spouse had been brought: the same is called here *the galleries of the King*, viz: these ordinances in which the Lord Jesus reveals himself to his people in the house of their pilgrimage. Here I will only, 1. Mention a few of these galleries. 2. Inquire why ordinances are compared to galleries.

First, I will only mention these few galleries.

1. There is the secret gallery of meditation, in which David found God's "loving kindness to be better than life," and had his "soul satisfied as with marrow and fatness."

2. There is the gallery of prayer, in which Jacob wrestled with the angel of the covenant, and, like *a prince*, *prevailed* for the blessing.

3. There is a gallery of reading of the scriptures, in which the Ethiopian eunuch got such a discovery of the promised Messiah, as made him "go on his way rejoicing."

4. There is a gallery of Christian converse about soul-matters; in which the disciples going to Emmaus had such a meeting with Christ, as made "their hearts burn within them."

5. There is the gallery of preaching, or of hearing of the word preached; "by the foolishness of which God saveth them that believed." Here it was that Lydia's heart was opened. And,

6. The sacraments of the New Testament, baptism and the Lord's supper, are galleries in which Zion's King displays his glory before his people. The last of these is, by way of eminence, called *the communion;* not only because in it the people of God have communion one with another, but because in it they have "fellowship with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ."

Secondly, As to the second thing here, why are these ordinances compared to galleries? I answer,

1. Galleries are magnificent apartments of royal and stately buildings. So there is a divine magnificence in the ordinances of the gospel, when countenanced with the presence of the great Master of assemblies. It is true, they appear mean and contemptible in the eyes of a profane world, who are strangers to the power of godliness; but the man "who has his senses *spiritually* exercised to discern good and evil," sees a divine greatness and magnificence in them, suitable to the state and royalty of "the Prince of the kings of the earth." And when the man is admitted to see the power and glory of God in them, he cannot but join issue with Jacob, saying, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven," Gen. xxviii. 17.

2. Galleries are lightsome and pleasant apartments. O how pleasant and lightsome are ordinances to a gracious soul! Let a child of God be where he will, he reckons it but "a dry and thirsty land, where no water is," if he be not admitted to the galleries of ordinances, Psal. lxiii. 1, 2. See how the same holy man expresses his delight in ordinances, Psal. lxxxiv. 1: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" I am sure this will be the language of every soul that has been in the galleries with the King this day.

3. Galleries are places of walk and converse, as is plain from Ezek. xli. 15. When a king, or great man designs to be familiar with his friend, he will take a turn with him in the galleries. So it is in gospel-ordinances that Christ walks, and converses with his people. Here it is that he gives them audience, allows them to be free and familiar with him, draws aside the veil, communicates the secrets of his covenant, and mysteries of his kingdom, which are hid from the wise and prudent of the world.

4. Galleries are places of public feasting and entertainment of friends. So it is in the mount of gospel-ordinances that the Lord has provided for his people, "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." Here it is that Christ says to his people, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Thus, I have given you some account of the galleries of the King.

III. The *third* thing proposed was, to *speak of the holding of the King in the galleries;* which is what I had principally in view. And here I will show what this holding of Christ supposes and implies, both on the believer's part and on Christ's part.

First, What does it suppose and imply on the believer's part?

1. It necessarily supposes a meeting with Christ in the galleries; for no person can hold that which they never had. To you that never knew what it was to enjoy communion with Christ in his ordinances, this doctrine is a hidden mystery.

2. It supposes a high esteem of Christ, a love to, and liking of his company. We are at no pains to hold those for whose company we care not; but when we are pressing with a friend to stay with us, it says that we value his company. Sirs, there are various opinions about Christ among the hearers of the gospel. The profane world look upon him as a severe and tyrannical master, and therefore "they will not have this man to reign over them. They say unto the Almighty, Depart from us." Again; carnal, lukewarm professors, "see no form nor comeliness in him, why he should be desired:" and therefore they are ready to say with the daughters of Jerusalem, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" They cannot see any engaging excellency in the King of Zion. But it is otherwise with the believer: the glory and beauty of Christ darken all created excellency in his eye; his language is, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. He is the apple-tree among the trees of the wood; the standard-bearer among ten thousand."

3. On the believer's part, this holding of Christ supposes a fear of losing him, or of being deprived of his company. The soul that has met with Christ, is afraid of a parting. It is true, the believer has no ground to fear the loss of Christ's real and gracious presence; for the union between Christ and him is indissoluble; that promise can never fail, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." But as for his sensible and comfortable presence, they both may, and frequently do lose it; the child of light many times walks in darkness. Now, it is the loss of this presence of Christ that the soul fears, when it is concerned to hold or bind the King in the galleries. Neither is this a fear of despondency, but a fear of activity and diligence.

4. It supposes a seeming willingness in Christ to withdraw from his people after their sweetest enjoyments. Many times Christ's carriage in his dispensations towards his people seems to have a language much like that to Jacob, when he said to him, *Let me go;* or like his carriage towards the two disciples going to Emmaus, he made as if he would leave their company, and go on in his way. And his carriage seems to have this language, especially when he challenges them for bad entertainment they have formerly given him, when he lets loose the tempter to buffet them after signal manifestations, or when he tries them with sharp troubles and afflictions. In all these

cases he seems as it were to be turning about the face of his throne from them.

5. It implies a holy solicitude, and earnest desire of soul, to have his presence continued. When Christ is hiding, there is nothing the believer desires more than his return: "O that I knew where I might find him!" And when they have found him, there is nothing they desire more than to keep his company, or that he would not be any more to them "as a stranger, or way-faring man." O! says the soul, when it gets a meeting with the Lord Jesus, "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts," Cant. i. 13. As if she had said, 'If he will stay with me, I will deny him nothing I can afford; I will entertain him with the highest evidences of cordial affection.'

6. It implies an ardent breathing of soul after more and more nearness to Christ and farther discoveries of him. There is not such a high discovery of Christ attainable in this life, but there is always a step beyond it. The believer would always have more of Christ, Cant. ii. 5. The spouse there is brought into the banqueting-house, and allowed to feast and feed liberally upon the Redeemer's love, and to sit down under his displayed banner: and yet at that very instant she cries out, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." As if she had said, 'Let me lie down among these comforts; let me roll myself perpetually among the blessed apples of the tree of life.' They who have got so much of Christ as to be tired of his company, never knew what his presence was.

7. It implies a firm resolution not to part with his company: "I held him," says the spouse, "and would not let him go," Song, iii. 4. The like we see in Jacob, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;" that is, I am resolved, that thou and I shall not part, cost what it will.

8. It implies a cleaving or adhering to Christ with the whole strength and vigour of the soul.

Quest. How, or in what does the soul put forth its strength in cleaving to Christ? I answer, it does it by these three especially.:—

1*st*, By the lively exercise of faith. Hence faith is called an apprehending of Christ, and a cleaving to him, as Barnabas exhorts the Christians at Antioch to "cleave unto the Lord with full purpose of heart." The poor soul says to Christ, in this case, as Ruth did to Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." An instance of this cleaving to Christ we have in the Canaanitish woman;

she, as it were, clasps about him, and will by no means quit her hold, notwithstanding all repulses.

2*dly*, The soul binds or holds Christ in the galleries by sincere and ardent love. Love is a very uniting affection; by this one soul cleaves to another. As Shechem's soul did cleave to Dinah, and Jonathan's to David; so by love the soul cleaves to Christ: and this is a cord that cannot be easily broken; Cant. viii. 7: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." See for this also, Rom. viii. 35: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" &c.

3*dly*, The soul cleaves to Christ by fervent and ardent prayer, Jacob held the Angel of the covenant, and would not let him go: Hos. xii. 3, 4: "By his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: for he wept and made supplication unto him.—The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man" has a strange prevalence with Christ; it offers a holy kind of violence to him; and so binds him in the galleries that he cannot depart. Thus, you see what it implies on the believer's part.

Secondly, What does it imply on Christ's part, *The King is held in the galleries?*

1. It implies amazing grace and condescension toward the work of his own hands: "He humbleth himself," even when he "beholds the things that are in heaven:" much more when he bows the heavens, and walks with his people in the galleries of ordinances; and yet more when he is held by them in the galleries. This is such strange condescension, that Solomon, the greatest of kings, and the wisest of men, wondered at it; and wise men do not wonder at trifles: "Will God," saith he, "in very deed dwell with men on the earth?"

2. It implies Christ's great delight in the society of his people. He loves to be among them; where two or three of them are met in his name, he will be in the midst of them: "He rejoiced," from all eternity, "in the habitable part of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 31.

3. It implies, that there are certain cords which have a constraining power to retain him in his people's company: and they must be strong cords, indeed, with which Omnipotence is bound. I mention two or three.

1*st*, He is bound by the cord of his own faithfulness, which he has pledged in the promise. He has promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" and he will not deny his word, "his covenant he will not break." This was the prevailing argument with which Moses detained him in the camp of Israel, when he was threatening utterly to consume that

wicked people, Exod. xxxii. 10, 13: "Let me alone," saith the Lord to Moses, "that I may consume them. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven." He binds him with his own covenant, ratified with the solemnity of an oath.

2*dly*, He is bound in the galleries by the cord of his own love. As a compassionate mother cannot leave her child, when it cleaves to her, and clasps about her: so Christ's compassionate heart will not let him leave his people; his love to them surpasses the love of the most compassionate mother or tender-hearted parent: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me," Is. xlix. 15, 16.

3*dly*, He is bound to them by the bond of marriage: "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name: he has betrothed them to himself in righteousness, judgment, loving kindness, and mercies; and he rejoiceth over them, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride:" and because of this he will not, he cannot leave them.

IV. The *fourth* thing was, the *application* of the doctrine: and the *first* use is for information. Is it so that Zion's King is sometimes held in the galleries of gospel ordinances? Then,

1. See hence the happiness and dignity of the saints of God, beyond the rest of the world. We reckon that person highly honoured, who is admitted to the King's presence-chamber, and to walk with him in his galleries. "This honour have all the saints," either in a greater or less degree: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." And therefore I may infer, that they are "the excellent ones in the earth, and more excellent than their neighbour.—Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable."

2. See hence why the saints put such a value and estimate on gospel-ordinances. David every where declares his esteem of them; "I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. He would "rather be a door-keeper in the house of his God, than dwell in the tents of sin." Why, what is the matter? The plain matter is this; they are the galleries where Zion's King doth walk, and manifest his glory to his subjects: Psal. xxvii. 4: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord." I pass other uses, and go to a

Second use of this doctrine, and that is by way of *trial* and *examination*. My friends, you have been in the galleries of the King of Zion; but that is not enough: and therefore let me ask, Have you been in the galleries with the King? and have you been holding the King in the galleries? There are many poor ignorant creatures, who, if they get a token, and win to a communion-table, think all is right and clear between God and them; like the harlot, Prov. vii. 14: "Peace-offerings are with me; this day have I paid my vows." But, Oh, sirs, remember, folk may win in to the outer galleries of ordinances, and never win in to the inner gallery of communion with the Lord Jesus. For your trial as to this matter, I shall only propose a few questions to you.

Quest. 1. What did you hear in the galleries? what said the King to you? For, as I told you, the galleries of ordinances are the places of audience, where the King of Zion converses with his people. And readily, if he has spoken with you, you will remember what he said; for he "speaks as never man spake; he has the tongue of the learned, and his words are as goads, and as nails fastened in a sure place." The spouse, we find, had been in the chamber of presence, and in the banqueting-house; she tells that the King spake with her, and she remembers what he said, Cant. ii. 10: "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." So then, did the King speak with you in the galleries? did he speak a word of conviction, or a word of comfort, a word of peace, or a word of consolation? or whatever it be. *Quest.* How shall I know that it was his voice, and not the voice of a stranger? *Answ.* The sheep of Christ have a natural instinct by which they know his voice; it has a different sound from the voice of a stranger; and if you be the sheep of Christ, you will know it better than I can tell you it by words. When he speaks, he makes the heart to burn; and you will be ready to say with the disciples, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us" in the galleries? His words have kindled a flame of love that "many waters cannot quench;" a flame of zeal for his glory; a flame of holy joy, so that you will be ready to say with David, "God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice." When he speaks, he makes the soul to speak, whose lips were formerly closed; for his voice "makes the lips of those that are asleep, to speak." If he has said, "Seek ye my face;" your souls have echoed, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." If he has said, "Come;" thy soul has answered, "Behold, I come unto thee; for thou art the Lord my God." If he has spoken peace to you this day in the galleries, you will be concerned not to return again to folly; you have been made

to say, with Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

Quest. 2. I ask, What did you see in the galleries? Many sights are to be seen in the galleries of ordinances, and particularly in that of the Lord's supper. Here *the Lamb of God* is to be seen, "which taketh away the sin of the world;" and in a crucified Christ, who is evidently set forth in that ordinance, all the divine attributes and perfections shine with a greater lustre, than in the large volume of the creation. Here we might see the seemingly different claims of mercy and justice, with respect to fallen man, sweetly reconciled: the healing overture is, that the surety shall die in the room of the sinner; and thus justice shall be satisfied, and mercy for ever magnified. Here you might see the holiness and equity of God's nature sparkling in flames of wrath against him who "was made sin" for you; the sword awakened, even "against the man that is God's fellow," wounds and bruises him for your iniquities. There you might see the power of God spoiling principalities and powers, shaking the foundation of the devil's kingdom, and laying the foundation of a happy eternity for an elect world, in the death and blood of the eternal Son. In this ordinance you might have seen him writing his love in characters of blood; love which has neither brim, bottom, nor boundaries. Here he was to be seen as the "Amen, the faithful and true witness," girt with the golden girdle of faithfulness, sealing the covenant, and confirming it with many. Now, I say, have you seen any thing of this? Are you saying, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father? Did any of these divine rays of Zion's King break forth upon your soul? If so, then I am sure it has had something of a transforming efficacy with it; according to what we have, 2 Cor. iii. 18: "All we with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Jacob's cattle, you know, by the very working of fancy in the conception, by beholding the pilled rods, brought forth their young speckled and spotted. Now, if fancy could work such a resemblance, what must the eye of faith do, when it beholds the glory of God in the face of Christ, who is "the express image of his person?" John i. 14, 16: "The word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." It is remarkable, that by beholding his glory, we receive grace for grace. As the wax receives letter for letter from the seal, or as the child receives limb for limb from the parent; so, by beholding Christ, we receive grace for

grace from him: so as there is never a grace in Christ, when it is seen by faith, but it works something of a parallel grace on the soul. So then, try yourselves by this, and you may know whether you have been indeed in the galleries with the King.

Quest. 3. I ask, What have you tasted in the galleries? for, as you heard, galleries are for feasting and entertainment of friends. Now, did the King say to you, or is he yet saying it, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved?" Did he make you to "eat of the fatness of his house," and to "drink of the rivers of his pleasures?" "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," then I am sure you will, "as new-born babes, desire and thirst after the sincere milk of the word:" you will be saying, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples;" let me have more and more of this delicious fare. If you have been feasted with the King in the galleries, the world, and all the pleasures of it, will be as nothing in your eye, in comparison of Christ and the intimations of his love. O, says David, when his soul was "satisfied as with marrow and fatness," "Thy loving kindness is better than life," and all the comforts of life; they are but loss and dung when laid in the balance with him. If you have been feasting in the galleries, you will be desirous that others may share of the meal you have gotten; and, with David, be ready to say, "O taste and see that God is good." You will proclaim the praises of his goodness, as you have occasion, to them that fear him: "Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." And readily it will be the desire of your soul to abide in his presence, and to dwell, as it were, in the galleries of ordinances. O "it is good for us to be here! let us build tabernacles here," said Peter, on the mount of transfiguration. That will be the language of thy soul, Psal. xxvii. 4: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." So much for a use of trial.

Use *third* may be in a short word directed to two or three sorts of persons. 1. To you who know nothing of this doctrine, never met with the King in the galleries. 2. To you who have had a comfortable meeting with him. 3. To those who perhaps are complaining, "I sought him, but I found him not."

First, To you who never yet knew what it was to have a meeting with Zion's King in the galleries of gospel-ordinances; and perhaps, Gallio-like, you "care for none of these things." To you I shall only say,

1. Your condition is truly sad and lamentable, beyond expression or imagination. You are "aliens to Israel's commonwealth, strangers to the covenant of promise, without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world.—You are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity;" under the curse of God, and condemnation of the law, and absolute power of Satan, "who rules in the children of disobedience." You are lying within the sea-mark of God's wrath; and if you die in this condition, you will drink the dregs of the cup of his indignation through all eternity.

2. If you have in this case adventured to the galleries of a communion-table, you have run a very dreadful risk. You have adventured to the King's presence without his warrant, and without the wedding-garment of imputed righteousness, or of inherent holiness; and therefore have run the risk of being bound, hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness: you have been "eating and drinking judgment" to your own souls, and are "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." And therefore,

3. For the Lord's sake, let me beseech you to repent of your wickedness. Flee out of your lost and miserable condition, flee to "the horns of the altar." We declare to you, that there is yet "hope in Israel concerning" you. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," Is. lv. 7.

Secondly, A *second* sort of persons are those who have this day had a meeting with Zion's King in the galleries of ordinances. I shall only offer a word of exhortation to you, and of advice.

I. A word of exhortation. Have you met with the King in the galleries? O then be exhorted to hold him, and bind him in the galleries; take him with you from the more open and solemn galleries of public ordinances, to the more private and secret galleries of prayer, meditation, conference, and the like: follow the spouse's practice when she found him; "she held him, and would not let him go, until she had brought him into her mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived her." To engage you to hold him, take these motives:

Mot. 1. Consider his invaluable worth and excellency: The tongues of angels, let be of men, do but falter and stammer when they speak of him. His worth is best known by the character he gives of himself in his word. View him absolutely in himself; he is "the only begotten of the Father, the mighty God, the Prince of peace." View him compara-

tively; he is "fairer than the children of men, as the apple tree among the trees of the wood; the standard-bearer among ten thousand." View him relatively; he is thy *Head*, thy *Husband*, thy *Friend*, thy *Father*, thy *elder Brother*, thy *Surety*, *Shepherd*, and *Redeemer;* and, in a word, he is *all and in all.* And should not this make you to hold him?

Mot. 2. Consider, that thy happiness, believer, lies in the enjoyment of him. What is it, do you think, that constitutes the happiness of heaven through eternity? It is Christ's presence, a Mediator, the King of Zion, manifesting his heart-charming beauty to saints and angels through eternity. And what is it that raises the poor soul to the very suburbs of glory while in the wilderness? It is Christ manifesting himself in a sensible way to the soul: O this, this it is that fills the soul with "joy unspeakable, and full of glory!" The advantages that attend his presence with the soul are great and glorious. A cabinet of counsel attends his presence: he brings light with him; and no wonder, for he is "the Sun of righteousness:" "the veil and face of the covering" is rent when Christ comes, and darkness is turned into light. His presence has a mighty influence upon the believer's work in the wilderness; the believer then "rides upon the high places of the earth, and is fed with the heritage of Jacob;" he runs swiftly "like the chariots of Amminadib." His presence inspires with courage and strength; it makes "the feeble soul as David, and David as the angel of God; it gives power to the faint, and increases strength to them that have no might."—The soldier fights with courage when his captain is at hand. The poor believer is not afraid to encounter the king of terrors himself, when he is holding Christ in the arms of faith: Psal. xxiii. 4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." So, let this encourage you to hold him.

Mot. 3. Consider at what a dear rate this privilege was purchased for thee. Before Christ could pay thy soul a visit in the galleries, he behooved to swim a river and ocean of blood, to tread the wine-press of his Father's wrath. Justice had rolled insuperable mountains in his way, and these mountains he must pass, and make as a plain, before he could show himself in the galleries to thy soul. Does not this oblige you to entertain him, and give him welcome when come?

Mot. 4. If you quit your holds of him, and suffer him to depart, it may cost you very dear before you get another meeting with him. It is true, "his kindness shall never depart from thee, the covenant of his peace shall never be re-

moved." His gracious presence can never be lost; but his quickening, comforting, strengthening, and upholding presence may be lost: and even this may be of very dreadful consequence. As his presence is a heaven upon earth, so sometimes a hell upon earth follows his absence. Job, through his hiding, is made to "go mourning without the sun;" yea, to such a pass is he brought, through the frowns of God's countenance, that he is made to cry, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." And see to what a pass Heman is brought under desertion, Psal. lxxxviii. 6, 7: "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me; and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves." And again, ver. 15: "While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted." Let all these considerations, and many others I might name, quicken your diligence in holding the King in the galleries.

2. I come to offer you a few advices, in order to your holding the King in the galleries, and maintaining his presence with you.

1*st*, See that you keep his lodging clean, and beware of every thing that may provoke him to withdraw. This was the practice of the spouse after she had obtained a meeting with Christ, Cant. iii. 5: "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please." Particularly, there are two or three evils that you would carefully guard against. Beware of security. If you were paying a visit to your relation, you would think him tired of your company, if he would fall asleep beside you. Has Christ paid a visit to thy soul, and wilt thou fall asleep in his very presence and company? This is very provoking to the Lord Jesus. Cant. v. 3: the spouse there entertains Christ's visit with sloth; "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" But what comes of it? Christ withdrew, ver. 6: "I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer." Beware of turning proud of your attainments. Pride of gifts, pride of grace, pride of attainments, is what Christ cannot away with: he "gives grace to the humble, but he resisteth the proud, and beholdeth them afar off." Beware of worldly-mindedness, or suffering your hearts to go out immoderately after the things of time; for this is displeasing to the Lord, and intercepts the light of his countenance; Is. lvii. 17: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me and was wroth. The

friendship of this world is enmity with God." Beware of unbelief, the root of all other evils, and particularly the root and source of distance and estrangement between Christ and the soul; for "an evil heart of unbelief *causes* to depart from the living God." In a word, keep a strict watch and guard against every thing that may defile the lodging of Christ in thy soul. Under the law, God appointed porters to keep watch at the doors of the temple, that nothing might enter in to defile that house which was the dwelling-place of his name. Thy soul and body is the temple in which Christ dwells by his holy Spirit: and therefore guard against every thing that may defile it, and provoke him to depart; for "if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are," 1 Cor. iii. 17.

2*dly*, If you would hold the King in the galleries, it is necessary that grace be kept in lively exercise; for these are the spikenard and spices that send forth a pleasant smell in his nostrils. Let faith be kept in exercise; let this eye be continually on him: he is exceedingly taken with the looks of faith: Cant. iv. 9: "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." Keep the fire of love burning upon the altar of thy heart; for Christ loves to dwell in a warm heart: 1 John iv. 16: "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Maintain a holy and evangelical tenderness and melting of heart for sin; for "the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." And let hope be kept up in opposition to a sinking despondency. Christ does not love to see his friends drooping in his company: No, no; "he takes pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."

3*dly*, If you would have Christ staying with you in the galleries, you must put much work in his hand; for Christ does not love to stay where he gets no employment. Hast thou any strong corruption to be subdued? Tell him of it; for this is one part of his work, to subdue the iniquities of his people. Hast thou no sin to be pardoned, the guilt of which has many times stared thee in the face? Tell him of it; for "his name is Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins." Hast thou no want to be supplied? Tell him of it; for there is all fulness in him, fulness of merit and Spirit, fulness of grace and truth: he has a liberal heart, and he devises liberal things. Hast thou no doubts or difficulties to be resolved: Tell him your doubts; for he is "an Interpreter among a thousand." Employ him not only for yourselves,

but for others. Employ him for your mother church; entreat him to come unto your "mother's house, and to the chambers of her that conceived" you; that he would break these heavy yokes that are wreathed about her neck at this day; that he may "build up the walls of his Jerusalem, make her a peaceable habitation, and the praise of the whole earth;" that he may "take the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines," I mean, such teachers and preachers as are troubling the peace of the church, and obstructing the progress of the gospel, with their new-fangled opinions. But I must not insist.

Thirdly, A *third* sort of persons I proposed to speak to, were these who are perhaps complaining, that they have been attending in the galleries of ordinances, and particularly at a communion-table; yet they cannot say, dare not say, that they were privileged to see the King's face. Alas! may some poor soul be saying, I thought to have got a meeting with Zion's King, but hitherto I have missed my errand: "The Comforter that should relieve my soul, is far from me; and I, whither shall I go?" *Answ.* I shall only suggest a word of encouragement and advice to such of the Lord's people as may be in this case.

1. A word of encouragement.

1*st*, Then, do not think thy case unprecedented. Poor soul, what thinkest thou of David, Asaph, Heman, yea, of Christ himself?

2*dly*, Although Zion's King may hide himself for a little, yet he will not always hide, "lest the spirits should fail before him:" Psal. xxx. 4, 5: "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment: in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Is. liv. 7, 8: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.

3*dly*, Perhaps the King has been in the galleries with thy soul, when yet thou wast not aware that it was he. He was with Jacob at Bethel, and he "wist it not;" he was with the disciples going to Emmaus, and yet they mistook him. *Quest.* How shall I know whether the King has been in the galleries with my soul? For answer,

(1.) Art thou mourning and sorrowing over thy apprehended loss? Does it grieve thee at the very heart to think, that thou shouldst be at Jerusalem, and not see the King's face; at the King's table, and not have the King's company? If this be real matter of exercise to thee, thou dost not want his gracious presence, though thou art not aware; for "he is ever

nigh unto them that are of a broken heart." Christ is at Mary's hand when she is drowned in tears for the want of his company, and saying, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

(2.) Hast thou got a farther discovery of thine own emptiness, poverty, and nakedness? and is thy soul abased and laid in the dust on this account? This says, Christ has been present; for he comes in a work of humiliation, as well as in a work of consolation. Perhaps the devil is condemning, the law is condemning, conscience is condemning thee, and thou art condemning thyself as fast as any: be not discouraged, Christ is not far away, Psal. cix. 31: "He stands at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul."

(3.) Art thou justifying the Lord, and laying the blame of thy punishment upon thyself, as David, Psal. xxii. 1, 2, 3: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest me not? and in the night-season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."

(4.) Is thy hunger and thirst after Christ increased by thy apprehended want of his gracious presence? This says that he has been really present, for his blessing is upon thee: Matth. v. 6: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." And know for thy comfort, that "he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with good things."

(5.) Art thou resolved to wait on him and keep his way, although he hide his face and withdraw his sensible presence? Christ has not been altogether a stranger; no, "he is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him; *and* is really nigh unto all that call upon him in truth."

2. A word of advice, and only in so many words.

1*st*, Give not way to despondency; argue against it, as David, Psal. xlii. 5: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why are thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

2*dly*, See that you justify God, and beware of charging him foolishly. See what was David's practice, (and herein he was a type of Christ himself,) Psal. xxii. He is under hidings, ver. 1: "My God, why hast thou forsaken me," &c. What follows? ver. 3: "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."

3*dly*, Trust in a hiding God, as Job did: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," Job xiii. 15. This the Lord calls his people to under darkness, Is. l. 10; "Who is among you

that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

4*thly*, and *lastly*, Wait on him in the galleries of ordinances; hang about the posts of his door. And when you do not find him in public, seek him in private, and in the retired galleries of secret prayer, meditation, and conference: and go a little farther, like the spouse, above and beyond all duties and ordinances, to himself: "He is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.—They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." The spouse did so, and at length she found him whom her soul loved: Cant. iii. 4: "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go." The Lord bless his word.

SERMON V.

THE GROANS OF BELIEVERS UNDER THEIR BURDENS.*

Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.—PSAL. XXXVIII. 9.

The Spirit helpeth our infirmities; and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.—ROM. VIII. 26.

We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.—2 COR. V. 4.

IN the first verse of this chapter, the apostle gives a reason, why he, and others of the saints in his day, endured persecution for the cause of Christ, with such an unshaken constancy, and holy magnanimity: he tells us, that they had the prospect of better things, the solid and well-grounded hope of a happy immortality to follow upon the dissolution of this clay tabernacle of the body. Ye need not wonder, would he say, though we cheerfully and willingly undergo the sharpest trials for religion: "for we know, that if our earthly house

* Preached in the Tolbooth-church of Edinburgh, on a fast-day preceding the celebration of the Lord's supper, October, 27, 1720.

of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." When the poor believer can say with David, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," he will be ready to join issue with the same holy man, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Yea, so far is the apostle from being damped or discouraged at the thoughts of death, that he rather invites it to do its office, by striking down this clay tabernacle, that his soul may be at liberty to ascend to these mansions of glory, that his blessed Friend and Elder Brother has prepared for him above: ver. 2: "In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." He knew very well, that when he should be stript of his mortal body, he *should not be found naked*, as it is ver. 3; but clothed with a robe of glory and immortality. And in the verse read, he gives a reason why he was so desirous to change his quarters; and it is drawn from the uneasiness and inconvenience of his present lodging, while cooped up in this clay tabernacle: *We that are in this tabernacle*, says he, *do groan, being burdened.*

In which words we may briefly notice, 1. The believer's present lodging or habitation; he is in a *tabernacle.* 2. His melancholy disposition; he is *groaning.* 3. The cause or reasons of his groans; *being burdened.*

1. I say, we have an account of the believer's present lodging or habitation; he is *in this tabernacle.* By the *tabernacle*, here, we are to understand the body; so called, because it is a weak, moveable sort of habitation; (as we may hear more fully afterwards.) The indweller of this lodging is the noble soul, which is said to be *in this tabernacle*, while it is in an imbodied state. So that the meaning is, *We that are in this tabernacle;* that is, we that are living in the body.

2. We have the melancholy disposition of the poor believer while in this lodging; he *groans.* The word in the original, στενάζω, rendered, *to groan*, we find it taken in a threefold sense in scripture. 1*st*, It is an expression of grief: Heb. xiii. 17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, that they may give their account of you, not with grief;" or, as it may be rendered, *Not with groans.* It is the same word that is here used. There is nothing more ordinary, when a person is weighed and pressed in spirit, than to give vent to the heart in sobs and groans: and thus stands the case with the Lord's people many times, while in the tabernacle of the body. 2*dly*, It is sometimes an expression of displeasure: James v. 9: "Grudge not one against another." It is the same word that is here rendered *to groan.* And so it imports, that the believer is dissatisfied with, or disaffected to, his pre-

sent quarters; he does not like it, in comparison of the better habitation that he has in view. 3*dly*, It is sometimes taken as an expression of ardent, passionate, and earnest desire. Thus, the word is taken in the second verse of this chapter: "In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." I shall not exclude any of these senses from the apostle's scope in these words.

3. In the words we have the cause or reason of the believer's groans; *being burdened.* Many a weary weight and heavy load has the believer hanging about him, while passing through this "valley of Baca," which make him to go many times with a bowed-down back. What these weights and burdens are, you may hear more fully afterwards.

The observation I offer from the words is this:

Doct. "That believers are many times burdened, even to groaning, while in the clay tabernacle of the body." *We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.*"

The method I shall observe, in handling this doctrine, is, to give you some account,

I. Of the believer's present lodging; he is in a tabernacle.

II. Of the believer's burdens in this tabernacle.

III. Of his groans under these burdens.

IV. Conclude with some improvement of the whole.

I. The *first* thing is, to *give you some account of the believer's present lodging while in the body.* And there are these two or three things that I remark about it, which I find in the text and context.

1. Then, I find it is called a *house* in the first verse of this chapter. And it is fitly so called, because of its rare and curious structure and workmanship; Psal. cxxxix. 14, 15: "I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret; and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." The body of man is a wonderful piece of architecture, and the skill and wisdom of the great Creator are wonderfully discovered in it: it is set up, as it were, by line and rule, in such exact order, that the most curious piles and edifices in the world are but a chaos or mass of confusion, when compared with it. Take a clod of dust, and compare it with the flesh of man, unless we were instructed of it beforehand, we would not imagine it to be one and the same matter, considering the beauty and excellency of the one above the other; which evidently proclaims the being, power,

and wisdom of the great Creator, who *made us, and not we ourselves*, and who can sublimate matter above its first original.

2. I remark concerning the believer's present lodging, that however curious its structure be, yet it is but a house of earth; therefore called in the first verse, *an earthly house.* And it is so, especially in a threefold respect.

1*st*, In respect of its original; it is made of earth. It is true, all the elements meet in the body of man, fire, earth, water, and air; but earth is the predominant. And therefore, from thence he is said to have his rise; Job iv. 19: "He dwells in houses of clay, and his foundation is in the dust." Whatever be the beauty, strength, structure, or high pedigree of men; yet as to their bodies, they claim no higher extract than the dust of the earth.

2*dly*, It is a house of clay, in respect of the means that support it; it stands upon pillars of dust; for the corn, wine, and oil, wherewith the body of man is maintained, all spring out of the earth. Hos. ii. 21, 22: God is said to *hear the heavens*, the heavens to *hear the earth*, the earth to *hear the corn, wine, and oil*, and these *to hear Jezreel.* And if these props be withdrawn, how soon will the clay tabernacle fall to the ground, and return to its original?

3*dly*, It is a house of earth in respect of its end; it returns thither at its dissolution. Accordingly, see what God said to Adam, Gen. iii. 19: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Perhaps there may be some allusion to these three in that passionate exclamation of the prophet Jeremiah to the rebellious Jews, Jer. xxii. 29: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." They were earth in their original, they were earth as to their support, and they would return to earth in the end.

3. I remark concerning the believer's present lodging, that it is at best but a tabernacle. So it is called, ver. 1: "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved;" and again here, *We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.*" Now, a tabernacle or a tent is a moveable or portable kind of habitation, and is peculiar especially to two sorts of men. 1. To travellers or wayfaring men. 2. To soldiers or warfaring men.

1*st*, I say, tabernacles or tents are peculiar to strangers or wayfaring men. Strangers, especially in the eastern countries, used to carry these portable houses about with them, because of the inconveniences to which they were exposed. Hence, (Heb. xi. 9,) it is said of Abraham, that "by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with

him of the same promise." They dwelt in tabernacles, because they had no present inheritance; they were only strangers and passengers in the country. To this the apostle probably alludes here. And so this intimates to us, that the saints of God, while in the body, are pilgrims and strangers, not as yet arrived at their own country: "I am a stranger in the earth," says the psalmist, Psal. cxix. 19; and it is said of the scripture-worthies, (Heb. xi. 13,) that they "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; they desired a better country, that is, a heavenly." O believer, thou art not a resident, but only a passenger through this valley of Baca; and therefore study a disposition of soul suitable to thy present condition.

2*dly*, Tabernacles were used by strangers and wayfaring men, so by soldiers and warfaring men, who are obliged frequently to convey their camps from one place to another. Believers, while they are in the tabernacle of the body, must act the part of soldiers, fight their way to the promised land, through the very armies of hell. "We wrestle not," says the apostle, "against flesh and blood; but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," Eph. vi. 12. And therefore, as the apostle exhorts, it concerns us to "put on the whole armour of God, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the girdle of truth;" and to be frequently accustoming ourselves to a holy dexterity in wielding and managing "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," that so we may be able to make a courageous stand in the day of battle, and at last come off the field in a victorious manner, when Christ the Captain of our salvation shall sound the retreat at death. Thus, the believer's lodging in a tabernacle, shows him to be both a traveller and a soldier.

4. Another thing that I remark concerning the believer's lodging, is, that it is but a tottering and crazy house, that is shortly to be taken down; for, says the apostle, ver. 1: "The earthly house of this tabernacle is" to be "dissolved.—What man is he," says the psalmist, "that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" Psal. lxxxix. 48. This king of terrors has erected his trophies of victory over all that ever sprung of Adam. The greatest Cæsars and Alexanders, who "made the world to tremble" with their swords, were all forced at last to yield themselves captives to this grim messenger of the Lord of hosts. "There is no discharge of this warfare;" the tabernacle of the body must dissolve. However, it may be ground of encouragement to the believer, that death is not a destruc-

tion or annihilation: no, as the apostle tells, it is only a dissolving, or taking down of the tent or tabernacle; for God designs to set up this tabernacle again at the resurrection, more glorious than ever. It was the faith of this that comforted and encouraged Job under his affliction, Job xix. 25, 26: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, and though my reins be consumed within me," says he, "yet in my flesh shall I see God." So much for the *first* thing in the method.

II. The *second* thing proposed was, to *speak a little of the believer's burdens while in this tabernacle.* This earthly house lies under many servitudes, and the believer, as one says, pays a dear mail or rent for his quarters. For,

1. The clay tabernacle itself is many times a very heavy burden to him. The crazy cottage of the body is liable to innumerable pains and distempers, which makes it lie like a dead weight upon the soul, by which its vivacity and activity are exceedingly marred. When the poor soul would mount up, as upon eagles' wings, the body will not bear part with it. So that the believer feels the truth of Christ's apology verified in his sad experience, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

2. Not only is he burdened with a burden of clay, but also with a burden of sin; I mean indwelling corruption, the secret atheism, enmity, unbelief, ignorance, pride, hypocrisy, and other abominations of his heart. O but this is a heavy burden, which many times is like to dispirit the poor believer, and press him through the very ground. David (though a man according to God's own heart,) yet cries out under this burden, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults," Psal. xix. 12. And the apostle Paul never complained so much of any burden as of this, Rom. vii. 24: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" To be rid of this burden, the poor believer many times would be content that this clay tabernacle were broken into shivers.

3. He is burdened many times with a sense of much actual guilt, which he has contracted through the untenderness of his way and walk. Conscience, that deputy of the Lord of hosts (being supported by the authority of the law,) frequently brings in a heavy indictment against the poor soul, and tells it, Thus and thus thou hast sinned, and trampled upon the authority of God the great Lawgiver. In this case the believer cannot but take with the charge, and own, with David, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me," Psal. xxxviii. 4, and

Psal. xl. 12: "Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me."

4. He is sometimes sadly burdened with the temptations of Satan. The devil, that cunning "archer, shoots at him, and sore wounds and grieves him." Sometimes whole showers of fiery darts, dipt in hell, are made to fly about his ears. God, for holy and wise ends, suffers the believer to be winnowed, sifted, and buffeted by this enemy. And O how much is the believer burdened in this case! Sometimes he is ready to conclude with David, One day or other I shall fall by this roaring lion, that goes about seeking to devour me; sometimes he is brought to his wit's end, saying, with Jehoshaphat in great extremity, when surrounded by enemies, "I know not what to do, but mine eyes are towards thee." But let not the believer think strangely of this, seeing Christ himself was not exempted from the molestations of this enemy.

5. Sometimes the believer is burdened with the burden of ill company. The society of the wicked, which perhaps is unavoidable, is a great incumbrance to him, and tends mightily to mar and hinder him in his work and warfare. Hence David utters that mournful and melancholy complaint, Psal. cxx. 5, 6: "Wo is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar," &c. The believer is of Jacob's disposition, with reference to the wicked, Gen. xlix. 6: "O my soul, come not thou unto their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." And truly, sirs, if the company and society of the wicked be not your burden, it is a sign you are of their society.

6. Sometimes the believer is sadly burdened, not only with his own sins, but with the abounding sins and abominations of the day and place in which he lives. "I beheld the transgressors," says David, "and was grieved. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes: because they keep not thy law," Psal. cxix. 136, 158. O what a heart-breaking thing is it to the poor soul, to see sinners dashing themselves to pieces upon the thick bosses of God's buckler, and, as it were, upon the rock of salvation, running headlong to their own everlasting ruin, without ever reflecting upon their ways! His very bowels yearn with pity towards them, who will not pity themselves. Upon this account believers are frequently designated the "mourners in Zion: they sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of Jerusalem," Ezek. ix. 4.

7. The believer is many times, while in this tabernacle, burdened with the public concerns of Christ. He is a person

of a very grateful and public spirit. Christ took a lift of him while he was in a low state; and therefore he cannot but be concerned for the concerns of his kingdom and glory, especially when he sees them suffering in the world. When he beholds the boar out of the wood, or the wild beast of the forest, open and avowed enemies, wasting and devouring the church of God; when he sees the foxes spoiling the tender vines, and the watchmen wounding, smiting, or taking away the veil of the spouse of Christ, Song v. 7; when he sees the privileges of the church of Christ invaded, her doctrine and worship corrupted, her ordinary meals retrenched by the stewards of the house: these things, I say, are sinking and oppressing to his spirit; he then hangs his harp upon the willows, when he remembers Zion. In this case he is "sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and the reproach of it is his burden," Zeph. iii. 18.

8. The poor believer has many times the burden of great crosses and afflictions lying upon him, and these both of a bodily and spiritual nature, and *deep* many times *calleth unto deep;* the deep of external trouble calls to the deep of inward distress; and these, like two seas meeting together, break upon him with such violence, that the waters are like to come in unto his very soul. Sometimes, I say, he has a burden of outward troubles upon him; perhaps a burden of sickness and pain upon his body, by which the crazy tabernacle of clay is sorely shattered: "There is no soundness in my flesh," says David, "because of my sin," Psal. xxxviii. 3. Sometimes he is burdened with poverty, and want of the external necessaries of life, which needs be no strange thing, considering that the Son of God, the heir of all things, became poor; and so poor, that, as he himself declares, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Sometimes he is burdened with infamy and reproach, malice and envy striking at his reputation, and wounding his name. "False witnesses," says David, "rose up against me; they laid to my charge things that I knew not," Psal. xxxv. 11. Sometimes he is burdened in his relations, as by their miscarriages. It was a grief of heart to Rebekah, when Esau married the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, Gen. xxvi. 34, 35. And no doubt David had many a sad heart for the miscarriages of his children, particularly of Amnon and Absalom. Sometimes he is burdened with the death of near relations. It is breaking to him when the Lord takes away the desire of his eyes with a stroke. I might here tell you also of many trials and distresses of a more spiritual nature, that the believer is exercised with, besides those already named. Sometimes he has the burden of much weighty work lying

on his hand, and his heart is like to faint at the prospect of it, through the sense of his own utter inability to manage it, either to God's glory, or his own comfort, or the edification of others; such as, the work of his station, relation, and generation, and the great work of his salvation. This lies heavy upon him, till the Lord say to him, as he said to Paul in another case, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Sometimes the believer in this tabernacle is under the burden of much darkness. Sometimes he is in darkness as to his state; he "walks in darkness, and has no light," insomuch that he is ready to raze the foundation, and to cry, "I am cast out of thy sight: the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me," Is. xlix. 14. Sometimes he is in darkness as to his duty, whether he should do or forbear; many a perplexing thought rolls in his breast, till the Lord, by his word and Spirit, say to him, "This is the way, walk ye in it," Is. xxx. 21. Sometimes he is burdened with distance from his God, who seems to have withdrawn from him behind the mountains; and in this case he cries, with the church, "For these things I weep, mine eye, mine eye, runneth down with water, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul, is far from me," Lam. i. 16. And sometimes it is a burden to him to think, that he is at such a distance from his own country and inheritance; and in this case he longs to be over Jordan, at the promised land, saying, "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; which is best of all," Phil. i. 23. Sometimes, again, he is under the burden of fear, particularly the fear of death. Heb. ii. 15, we read of some who are held in bondage all their life through fear of death: and yet, glory to God, such have had a safe landing at last.

Thus I have told you of some of these things with which the believer is burdened, while in the tabernacle of this body.

III. The *third* thing in the method was, to *speak of the believer's groaning under his burden:* for (says the apostle,) *We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.* Upon this head I shall only suggest two or three considerations.

1. Consider, that the working of the believer's heart, under the pressures of these burdens, vents itself variously. Sometimes he is said to be in heaviness: 1 Pet. i. 6: "If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Sometimes he is said to sigh under his burdens, and to sigh to the breaking of his loins: he is said to fetch his sighs from the bottom of his heart: "My sighing cometh before I eat," says Job. Sometimes his burdens make him to cry. Sometimes he cries to his God, Psal. cxxx. 1: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." Sometimes he cries to by-standers and on-lookers, as Job did to his friends, "Have pity upon me,

O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me," Job xix. 21; or, with the church, Lam. i. 12: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me, in the day of his fierce anger." Sometimes he is said to roar under his burden: "My roarings," says Job, "are poured out like the water." "I have roared all the day long," says David, "by reason of the disquietness of my heart." Sometimes he is at the very point of fainting under his burden: "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Sometimes his spirits are quite overset and overwhelmed: Psal. lxi. 2: "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Sometimes again he is as it were distracted, distracted and put out of his wits, through the weight of his burdens, especially when under the weight of divine terrors. Thus it was with holy Heman, Psal. lxxxviii. 15: "While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." Yea, sometimes the matter is carried so far, that it goes to the drinking up of the very spirits, and a drying and withering of the bones; as you see in the case of Job; "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit." O the heavy tossings of the believer's heart under his burdens! the apostle here expresses it by *a groaning: We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.*

2. For clearing this, you would know, that there are three sorts of groans that we read of in scripture: 1*st*, Groans of nature. 2*dly*, Groans of reason. 3*dly*, Groans of grace.

1*st*, I say, we read of groans of nature. Rom. viii. 22: "We know," says the apostle, "that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now." Man, by his sin, brought a curse upon the good creatures of God; "Cursed is the ground for thy sake," Gen. iii. 17. And the very earth upon which we tread groans, like a woman in travail, under the weight of that curse and vanity, that it is subjected to through the sin of man; and it longs, as it were, to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God, at the day of their manifestation.

2*dly*, We read of groans of reason, or of the reasonable creatures under their affliction. Thus, we are told, that the children of Israel groaned under the weight of their affliction in Egypt, by reason of the heavy tasks that were imposed upon them: Exod. vi. 5: "I have heard," says the Lord, "the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage."

3*dly*, We read of groans of grace, or of spiritual groans, Rom. viii. 26: *The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* And of this kind, we conceive, are these groans which the apostle speaks of in our text; they are not natural, neither are they merely rational groans, though even these are not to be excluded, but they are gracious and supernatural, being the fruit of some saving work of the Spirit of God upon the soul. And, therefore,

3. A *third* remark I offer is this, that these groans of the gracious soul here spoken of, seem to imply, as was hinted at in the explication of the words, (1.) A great deal of grief and sorrow of spirit on account of sin, and the sad and melancholy effects of it on the believer, while in this imbodied state. (2.) It implies a displeasure, or dissatisfaction in the believer, with his present burdened state; he cannot find rest for the sole of his foot here; he finds that this is not his resting place. And, (3.) It implies a breathing and panting of soul after a better state, even the immediate enjoyment of God in glory, (ver. 1,) he *groans* with an "earnest desire to be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven."

IV. But I proceed to the *fourth* thing in the method, which was the *application* of the doctrine. And the *first* use shall be of *information.*

1. Hence we may see the vast difference between heaven and earth. O what vast odds is there betwixt the present and future state of the believer! between his present earthly lodging, and his heavenly mansion! This world is but at best a "weary land:" but there is no wearying in heaven: no; "They shall serve him day and night in his holy temple." This world is a land of darkness, where thou goest many a time "mourning without the sun;" but when once thou comest to thine own country, "the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." This world is a land of distance; but in heaven thou shalt be at home: when "absent from the body," thou shalt be "present with the Lord." This world is a "den of lions," and a "mountain of leopards;" but there is no lion or leopard there: "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain" above. This world is a land of thorns: many pricking briers of affliction grow here; but no pricking brier or grieving thorn is to be found in all that country above. This world is a polluted land, it is defiled with sin; but "there can in no wise enter into" the land of glory "any thing that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." In a word, there is nothing but matter of groaning, for the most part, here; but all ground of groaning ceases for ever there.

2. See hence, a consideration that may contribute to stay or allay our griefs, sobs, and groans, for the death of godly relatives; for while in this tabernacle they "groan, being burdened:" but now their groans are turned into songs, and their mourning into hallelujahs; for "the ransomed of the Lord," when they "return," or "come to Zion," at death or the resurrection, it is "with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing flee away," Is. xxxv. 10. And therefore, let us "not sorrow as them that have no hope." If our godly friends that are departed, could entertain converse with us, they would be ready to say to us, as Christ said to the daughters of Jerusalem, O "weep not for us, but weep for yourselves;" for we would not exchange conditions with you for ten thousand worlds: ye are yet groaning in your clay tabernacle, oppressed with your many burdens; but as for us, the day of our complete redemption is come, our heads are lifted up above all our burdens, under which, once in a day, we groaned while we were with you.

3. See hence, that they are not always the happiest who have the merriest life of it in the world. Indeed, if we look only to things present, the wicked would seem to have the best of it, for, instead of groaning, "they take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ; they spend their days in wealth" and ease, Job xxi. 12, 13. But, O, sirs, remember, that it is the evening that crowns the day. "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment:" whereas the groanings of the righteous are but short, and their jubilee and triumph shall be everlasting. "Mark the perfect man," says David, "and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together, the end of the wicked shall be cut off," Psal. xxxvii. 37. I will read you a word that will show the vast difference betwixt the godly and the wicked, and discover the strange alteration of the scene betwixt them in the life to come: Is. lxv. 13, 14: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit."

4. See hence, that death needs not to be a terror to the believer. Why? Because, by taking down this tabernacle it takes off all his burdens, and puts a final period to all his groans. Death, to a believer, is like the fiery chariot to Elijah; it makes him drop the mantle of his body with all its filthiness: but it transports his soul, his better part, into the

mansions of glory, "the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The *second* use of the doctrine may be of *reproof* to two sorts of persons.

1. It reproves those who are at home while in this tabernacle. Their great concern is about this clay tabernacle, how to gratify it, how to beautify and adorn it; their language is, "Who will show us any good?—What shall we eat? what shall we drink? wherewithal shall we be clothed?" But they have no thought or concern about the immortal soul which inhabits the tabernacle, which must be happy or miserable for ever. O, sirs! remember, that whatever care you take about this clay tabernacle, it will drop down to dust ere long, and the noisome grave will be its habitation, where worms and corruption will prey upon the fairest face, and purest complexion. Where will be your beauty, strength, or fine attire, when the curtains of the grave are drawn about you?

2. This doctrine serves to reprove those who add to the burdens and groans of the Lord's people, as if they were not burdened enough already. Remember that it is a dreadful thing to vex or occasion the grief of those whom the Lord has wounded: they that do so, counteract the commission of Christ from the Father, who was "sent to comfort them that mourn in Zion, to give them the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." But, on the contrary, they study to give a heavy spirit, and to strip and rob them of their garments of praise. Remember that Christ is very tender of his burdened saints; and if any offer to lay a load above their burden, by grieving or offending them, the Lord Jesus will not pass it without a severe resentment; and "it were better for *such* that a millstone were hanged about their neck, and that they were drowned in the depth of the sea."

A *third* use shall be of *lamentation* and *humiliation*. Let us lament, that the Lord's saints and people should have so much matter of groaning at this day and time wherein we live. And here I will tell you of several things that are a burden to the spirits of the Lord's people, and help on their groaning, and make them sad hearts.

1. The abounding profanity and immorality of all sorts that are to be found among us. O how rampant is atheism and profanity; and impiety, like an impetuous torrent, carrying all before it! It is become fashionable among some to be impious and profane. Religion, which is the ornament of a nation, is faced down by bold and petulant wits: It is reckoned, by some, a genteel accomplishment to break a jest

upon the Bible, and to play upon things religious and sacred. O what cursing and swearing! O what lying and cheating! what abominable drunkenness, murders, and uncleanness! with what perjury and blasphemy is the land defiled! We may apply that word, Hos. iv. 3: "For these things the land mourns." The land groans at this day under these and the like abominations. And, therefore, no wonder that the hearts of those that regard the glory of God do groan under them also, and cry with the prophet, Jer. ix. 1, 2: "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people. Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them: for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men."

2. The universal barrenness that is to be found among us at this day, is matter of groaning to the Lord's people.—God has been at great pains with us both by ordinances and providences: he has planted us in a fruitful soil; he has given us a standing under the means of grace; he has given us "line upon line, precept upon precept:" and yet, alas! may not the Lord say of us, as he said of his vineyard, Is. v. 2: "I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." And, as for the fruit of providences, alas! where is it? Mercies are lost on us; for when God feeds us to the full, when he gives peace and plenty, then, Jeshurun like, we *wax fat, and kick* against him, Deut. xxxii. 15. And as mercies, so rods and afflictions are lost upon us likewise: God has "stricken us, but we have not grieved;" he has "consumed us, but we have refused to receive correction," Jer. v. 3.

3. The lamentable divisions that are in our Reuben, occasion great thoughts of heart, and heaviness to the Lord's people at this day. Court and country, church and state, are divided: ministers divided from their people, and people from their ministers; and both ministers and people are divided among themselves; and every party and faction turning over the blame upon the other: than which there cannot be a greater evidence of God's anger, or of approaching ruin and desolation; for "a city or kingdom divided against itself cannot stand," Matth. xii. 25.

4. The innumerable defections and backslidings of our day are a great burden to the Lord's people, and make their hearts to groan within them. The charge which the Lord advances against the church of Ephesus, may too justly be laid to our door, that we are *fallen from our first love.* There is but little love to God or his people, little zeal for his way

and work, to be found among us; the power of godliness, and life of religion, are dwindled away into an empty form with the most part.

I might here take occasion to tell you of many public defections and backslidings that we stand guilty of before the Lord; particularly, of the breach of our solemn national engagements. It was once the glory of our land to be "married unto the Lord," by solemn covenant, in a national capacity; but, to our eternal infamy and reproach, it has been both broken and burnt by public authority in this very city. Perhaps, indeed, some may ridicule me for making mention of the breach of our solemn engagements; but I must blow the trumpet, as God's herald, "whether ye will hear or forbear." And you who ridicule these things now, will perhaps laugh at leisure, if God shall send a bloody sword, or raging pestilence, to "avenge the quarrel of his covenant."

But some may say, Ye talk of breach of solemn national engagements; but wherein does the truth of such a charge appear?

For answer, I shall instance in a few particulars. It is fit that we not only know wherein our fathers have broken this covenant; but wherein ourselves, this present generation, stands guilty.

1. Then, in our national covenant we swear, that we will endeavour to be humbled for our own sins, and for the sins of the kingdom. But, alas! public days of fasting and humiliation for the sins of the land are but rare, and thinly sown at this day. Where are the mourners of our Zion? How few are they whose hearts are bleeding for the abounding wickedness of the day! If God should give a commission to the men with the slaughter weapons to go through Scotland, and "slay utterly old and young, only come not near any that sigh and cry;" O what a depopulated country would it be! how few inhabitants would be left in the land!

2. In that covenant we are bound to go before one another in the example of a real reformation. But, alas! who makes conscience of this part of the oath of God? How little personal reformation is there! how little care to have the heart purified from lusts and uncleanness! so that the Lord may well say to us, as he said to Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness: how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" How little reformation of life! what a scandalous latitude do many professors of religion take to themselves, cursing, swearing, lying, drinking, cheating, and over-reaching others in their dealings, whereby the way of religion comes to be evil spoken of?

3. By the covenant we engage, not only to reform our-

selves, but our families. But alas! how little of this is to be found? How little care is taken by many parents and masters, to have their children and servants, after the example of Abraham, instructed in the good ways of the Lord! Every head of a family should be a priest in his family, for maintaining the worship of God in it: but, alas! how many are there who either perform the duty in a superficial manner, or else live in the total neglect of it! Go through many noblemen and gentlemen's families in the kingdom, and you shall find as little of the worship of God in them, as if they were Turks and Pagans, and perhaps, less. Yea, atheism is become so common among people of higher rank, that, with some, he is not reckoned a man of any spirit, that will bow a knee to God in his family.

4. In our national covenant we swear to endeavour the reformation of England and Ireland from the remains of Roman hierarchy, and ceremonies of man's invention in the worship of God. But how is this article performed, when, by solemn treaty, the representatives of the nation, in a parliamentary capacity, have consented, that episcopacy should continue as the form of worship and government in our neighbouring nation? Again, by the covenant we swear to endeavour the extirpation of popery: and yet how many masses are kept openly in the land, particularly in the northern parts of the kingdom! how many trafficking priests and Jesuits are swarming among us! and how many professed Protestants are there, who have of late shown their good will to sacrifice a protestant interest to the will of a popish Pretender? Again, in our national covenant, we abjure prelacy and tyranny in our church-government: but though prelatic tyranny be not established, yet there is too much of a prelatic spirit venting itself among us at this day, while many are laying claim to a negative voice in radical judicatories, over those whose offices give them equal interest in the government of the church with themselves. And there is but too much tyranny exercised over the Lord's people by many judicatories of the church, while men are thrust in upon them, to take the charge of their souls, contrary to their own free choice and election. Christ's little ones are but too little regarded, if the world's great ones be gratified. On which account many of the Lord's people are crying at this day with the church, Cant. v. 7: "The watchmen that went about the city, found me, they smote me, they took away my veil from me." Again; in our covenant, we abjure superstition in worship; and yet, to the scandal of our holy religion, it is not only tolerated by public authority, but greedily gone after by many in our land. Heresy and error are abjured by the covenant,

every doctrine inconsistent with the word of God, and our Confession of Faith; and yet all sorts of errors are tolerated, except rank popery, and blasphemy against the Trinity. It is true, the standard of our doctrine (blessed be God) remains pure; but it is to be lamented, there is not so much zeal discovered in curbing error, as our covenant vows do engage us to. Again; in our covenant, we abjure malignants; that is to say, enemies to a covenanted work of reformation, as being no members of our church, and, consequently, as having no right to the privileges of it; and yet malignant lords and lairds are the men who are generally gratified in the affair of planting churches, in opposition to them that fear God, and who, on all occasions, discover their love and regard for a covenanted work of reformation. Again; in the covenant, we swear against a detestable neutrality and indifference in the cause of God and religion; and yet how many Gallios are there among us, who are indifferent whether the interest of Christ sink or swim? And does it not discover too much of a lamentable lukewarmness and indifference of spirit about the way and work of God, when we are beginning to abridge the ordinary number of our sermons at our solemn gospel-festivals, and to diminish the solemnity of it, which has been so remarkably owned of God? What else is this, but a snuffing at his ordinances, and saying, practically, *What a weariness is it?* Mal. i. 13. Whatever some may think of the matter, yet I know that the hearts of many of the Lord's people *are sorrowful*, even unto groaning, *for the solemn assembly*. I shall not say, that what is now transacted of late, with relation to this matter, is a breach of our national covenant; but I say, it seems to be a sad evidence of the lukewarmness of our spirits about the way and work of God. And I find, that a "changing of the ordinances, and a breaking of the everlasting covenant," go together in scripture, Is. xxiv. 5.

I might have told you of many other things that break and burden the spirits of the Lord's people at this day; particularly, of the removing of the righteous by death; which, as it is a great and heavy judgment in itself, so it is an ordinary forerunner of some heavy calamity approaching: Is. lvii. 1: "Merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." And I suppose there may be many hearing me, whose hearts are inwardly groaning to this day, for the removal of that eminent light (Mr. James Webster,) which shined with such a refreshing lustre from this pulpit among you so many years. It bodes ill to our Zion, when such watchmen are called off from her walls, as, on all occasions, were ready to

blow the trumpet upon the approach of any danger from earth or hell. But I pass this use, and go on to

A *fourth* use of the doctrine, which shall be in a word to two sorts of persons.

First, A word to you who are not burdened in this tabernacle. You never knew what it was to groan, either for your own sins, or for the sins of the land in which you live, or the tokens of God's anger, which are to be found among us; these are things of no account with them, they can go very lightly and easily under them. All I shall say to you, shall be comprised in these two or three words:

1. It seems the adamant and nether-millstone you carry in your breast, was never to this day broken by the power of regenerating grace. And, therefore, I may say to you, as Peter said to Simon Magus, "Ye are yet in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity," Acts viii. 23. You are under the slavery of Satan, and the curse of the law, and wrath of God; and these are heavy burdens, whether you feel them or not.

2. Know it for a certainty, that, except mercy and repentance interpose, your groaning time is coming. However you make light of sin now, and of things serious and sacred; yet you will find them to be sad and weighty things when death is sitting down upon your eye-lids, when your eye-strings are breaking, and your souls taking their flight into another world. O "what will ye do in the day of visitation? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?" Is. x. 3. When you are standing trembling panels before the awful bar of the great Jehovah, will you make light of sin then? Or will you make light of it, when, with Dives, you are weltering among the flames of hell? O "consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." Whether do ye think it is better to groan awhile in this tabernacle under the burden of sin, or to groan for ever under the weight of God's vengeance, while an endless eternity endures?

Secondly, A second sort I would speak a word to, are poor, broken, and burdened believers, who are groaning under the weight of these burdens I mentioned. I only offer two or three things for your encouragement, with which I shall close; for we are to "comfort them that mourn in Zion."

1. Know, for thy comfort, poor believer, that thy tender-hearted Father is privy to all thy secret groans; though the world know nothing about them, he hears them. "Lord,"

says David, "all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee," Psal. xxxviii. 9. As he puts thy tears in his bottle, so he marks down thy groans in the book of his remembrance.

2. As the Lord hears thy groans, so he groans with thee under all thy burdens: for "he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and in all our afflictions he is afflicted." He has the bowels of a father to his children: Psal. ciii. 13: "As a father pitieth his children: so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Yea, his heart is so tender toward thee, that it is compared to the tender affection of a mother to her sucking child. And, therefore,

3. Know, for thy encouragement, that thou art not alone under thy burdens. No: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." He bears thee and thy burdens both: and, therefore, though you may "pass through the fire and water; yet the fire shall not burn thee, the waters of adversity shall not overwhelm thee."

4. Know, for thy comfort, that whatever be thy burden, and however heavy thy groanings be, there is abundant consolation provided for thee in God's covenant. And here I might go through the several burdens of the Lord's people, and offer a word of encouragement to you under each. I shall only touch them passingly.

1*st*, Art thou burdened with the body of clay? Perhaps thy clay cottage is always like to drop down every day; and this fills thee with heaviness. Well, believer, know, for thy comfort, that, "if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, thou hast a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." There are mansions of glory prepared for thee there, where thou "shalt be for ever with the Lord."

2*dly*, Art thou burdened with a burden of sin, crying, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Well, here is comfort, believer; thy "old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed." Ere long he will present thee to his Father, "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

3*dly*, Art thou burdened with the sense of much actual guilt? Art thou crying, with David, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me?" Well, but consider, believer, "God is faithful to forgive thee:" for he has said, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

4*thly*, Art thou burdened with the temptations and fiery

darts of Satan? Well, but consider, believer, Christ, thy glorious head, the true *seed of the woman*, has bruised the head of the old serpent: "through death he has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." And, as he overcame him in his own person, so he will make thee to overcome him in thy person ere long: "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

5*thly*, Is the society of the wicked thy burden? Art thou crying, "Wo is me, that I sojourn in Mesech? Why, consider, that thou shalt get other company ere long; when thou puttest off this clay tabernacle, thou shalt enter in among "the spirits of just men made perfect." Only stand thy ground, and be not conformed to the world.

6*thly*, Art thou burdened with the abounding sins and backslidings of the day and generation wherein thou livest? Well, be comforted, God's mark is upon thee as one of the mourners in Zion; and, in the day when the man with the slaughter-weapon shall go through, God will give a charge not to come near any upon whom his mark is found: "Thou shalt be hid in the day of the Lord's anger."

7*thly*, Art thou burdened with the concerns of Christ, with the interests of his kingdom and glory? Is thy heart, with Eli's, "trembling for fear of the ark of the Lord," lest it get a wrong touch? Know, for thy encouragement, that "the Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations;" and that, though "clouds and darkness be round about him," yet justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, and mercy and truth shall go before his face." Though *his way* be *in the whirlwind*, and *his footsteps in the great waters*, yet he carries on the designs of his glory, and his church's good. And as for thee that art "sorrowful for the solemn assembly, to whom the reproach of it is a burden," God will *gather* thee unto himself; he will gather thee unto the "general assembly, and church of the first-born."

8*thly*, Art thou burdened with manifold afflictions in thy body, in thy estate, in thy name, in thy relations? Know, for thy comfort, God is carrying on a design of love to thee in all these things: "Thy light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work for thee a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." See a sweet prophecy for thy comfort, Is. liv. 11, 12.

9*thly*, Art thou burdened with much weighty work? Perhaps thou knowest not how to manage this and the other duty; how to adventure to a communion-table, or the like. Well, for thy encouragement, poor soul, the Lord "sends none a warfare upon their own charges." And, therefore, look to

him, that he may bear thy charges out of the stock that is in thy Elder Brother's hand; and "go in his strength, making mention of his righteousness."

10*thly*, Art thou, under the burden of much darkness, crying, with Job, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him?" &c. Job. xxiii. 8.—Well, be comforted; for "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. Unto you that fear my name, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." And therefore say thou with the church, Mic. vii. 9: "He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness."—Again;

11*thly*, Art thou burdened with the Lord's distance from thy soul, "because the Comforter that should relieve thy soul, is far from thee?" Lam. i. 16: Well, be comforted, "He will not contend for ever," he has promised to return, Is. liv. 7, 8. The Lord cannot keep up himself long from the poor soul that is weeping and groaning after him; as we see in Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. 18, &c. Again;

12*thly*, Art thou burdened with the fear of death? Know, for thy comfort, the sting of death is gone, and it cannot hurt thee: Hos. xiii. 14: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

Lastly, Art thou burdened with the death of the righteous, particularly with the loss of faithful ministers? Well, be encouraged, that though the Lord take away an Elijah, yet the Lord God of Elijah lives, and *the residue of the Spirit* is still with him. And therefore take up David's song, and sing, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted."

SERMON VI.

THE BELIEVER EXALTED IN IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.—Is. xlv. 24, 25.

[The subject of the following discourse is high, noble, and excellent.—But my design at that time, being only to preface a little before the action-sermon, by that eminent and worthy servant of Christ, Mr. William Monerief, I took care to abridge my thoughts upon it as much as possible. I have since handled the same text, in my ordinary, at far greater length. But the discourse having been quarrelled with, as was hinted in the preface to that on Rev. iii. 4, I judged it fit to send it abroad, in the very same dress in which, to the best of my remembrance, it was delivered. It is not accuracy of style or method I set up for, but the edification of the poor, to whom the gospel is preached; and therefore shall contend with none upon those heads. But as for the doctrines here delivered, if I durst not hazard my own salvation upon the truth of them, I had never adventured to preach them as the truths of God to others. I am fully persuaded, that one great reason why the gospel has so little success in our day, is, because our discourses generally are so little calculated for pulling down our own, and exalting the righteousness of Christ, as the alone foundation which God hath laid in Zion. Our sermons lose their savour and efficacy for salvation, if this be wanting: and I humbly think the great apostle Paul was of this mind, Rom. i. 16, 17: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." And if any ask, Whence comes the gospel to have such power to salvation? He immediately answers, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith."]

In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.—Psal. lxxxix. 16.

The psalmist, in the beginning of this psalm, having run out at great length in the praise and commendation of the God of Israel, proceeds, from the 15th verse of the psalm, to declare the happiness of his Israel, or of true believers, of whom Israel according to the flesh were a type.

* Preached at the celebration of the Lord's supper, at Largo, Sabbath morning, June 4, 1721.

Now, God's Israel are a happy people upon several accounts. 1. Because they are privileged to *know the joyful sound*, in the beginning of the 15th verse. The gospel has a joyful sound; a sound of peace, a sound of life, a sound of liberty and salvation. You are all privileged to hear this sound with your bodily ears; but the great question is, do you know it, understand it, and give faith's entertainment to it? Alas! Isaiah's lamentation may but too justly be continued, with respect to the greatest part of the hearers of the gospel, "Who hath believed our report?" 2. God's Israel are a happy people, because they "walk in the light of his countenance," in the close of the 15th verse. They are privileged with the special intimations of his love, which puts more gladness in their hearts, than when corn, wine and oil abound.— 3. Whatever discouragement they may meet with from the world, yet still they have ground of rejoicing in their God: "In thy name shall they rejoice all the day;" and, "Thanks be unto God," says the apostle, "who always causeth us to triumph in Christ." 4. Their happiness is evident from this, that they are dignified and exalted above others, by the immaculate robe of a Surety's righteousness; as you see in the words of my text, *In thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*

In which words briefly we may notice, 1. The believer's promotion; he is *exalted.* In the first Adam we were debased to the lowest hell, the crown having fallen from our heads: but in Christ, the second Adam, we are again exalted; yea, exalted as high as heaven, for we "sit together with him in heavenly places," says the apostle. This is an incredible paradox to a blind world, that the believer, who is sitting at this moment upon the dunghill of this earth, should at the same time be sitting in heaven in Christ, his glorious head and representative; and yet it is indisputably true, that we "sit together with him in heavenly places," Eph. ii. 6. Yea, in him he "rules the nations with a rod of iron," and triumphs over, and treadeth upon all the powers of hell. 2. We have the ground of the believer's preferment and exaltation; It is *in thy righteousness.* It is not in any righteousness of his own; no; this he utterly disclaims, reckoning it but *dung and loss, filthy rags*, dogs' meat: but it is in *thy* righteousness; that is, *the righteousness of God*, as the apostle calls it, Rom. i. 17: "The righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 9. The righteousness of God is variously taken in scripture.— Sometimes for the infinite rectitude and equity of his nature: Psal. xi. 7: "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness."— Sometimes for his rectoral equity, or distributive justice, which he exercises in the government of the world, rewarding the good, and punishing evil-doers; Psal. xcvii. 2: "Jus-

tice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Sometimes it is put for his veracity and faithfulness in accomplishing his word of promise, or in executing his word of threatening; Psal. xxxvi. 5, 6: "Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds: thy righteousness is like the great mountains." Sometimes it is put for the perfect righteousness which Christ, the Son of God as our Surety and Mediator, brought in, by his obedience to the law, and death on the cross, for the justification of guilty sinners; and this, as I said, is frequently called *the righteousness of God:* and in this sense I understand it here in the text, *In thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*

The observation is much the same with the words themselves; namely, *That in, or by, the righteousness of Christ, believers are exalted.* Or thus, *To whatever honour or happiness believers are exalted, the righteousness of Christ is the ground and foundation of it.* It is all owing to the complete obedience, and meritorious death of the ever-blessed Surety. This is "the foundation which God hath laid in Zion," upon which all our happiness in time and through eternity is built.

I have not time now to adduce parallel texts of scripture for the confirmation of this doctrine, neither can I stand upon a long prosecution of it, considering what great work you have before you through the day. All I shall do, shall be only,

I. To offer a few propositions concerning this righteousness, that you may understand both the nature and necessity of it.

II. Give you a few of its properties, to clear its excellency.

III. Speak a little of the believer's exaltation by virtue of this righteousness.

IV. Apply.

I. For the *first* thing, to *offer a few propositions respecting this righteousness for clearing its nature and necessity.*

1. Then, you would know, that God having made man a rational creature, capable of moral government, gave him a law suited to his nature, by which he was to govern himself in the duties he owed to God his great Creator. This law was delivered to man in the form of a covenant, with a promise of life upon the condition of perfect obedience, and a threatening of death in case of disobedience, Gen. ii. 17.—Thus stood matters between God and man in a state of innocence.

2. Adam, and all his posterity in him, and with him,

having broken the covenant, are become liable to the curse, and penalty of it; so that our salvation is become absolutely impossible, until justice be satisfied, and the honour of the broken law repaired. The law and justice of God are very peremptory, and stand upon a full satisfaction and reparation, otherwise heaven's gates shall be shut, and eternally barred against man and all his posterity. The flaming sword of justice turns every way, to keep us from access to the paradise that is above.

3. While man in these circumstances, was expecting nothing but to fall an eternal sacrifice to divine justice, the eternal Son of God, in his infinite love and pity to perishing sinners, steps in as a Mediator and Surety; offering not only to take our nature, but to take our law-place, to stand in our room and stead: by which the whole obligation of the law, both penal and preceptive, did fall upon him; that is, he becomes liable and obliged both to fulfil the command, and to endure the curse of the covenant of works, which we had violated. And here, by the way, it is fit to advertise you, that it was an act of amazing grace in the Lord Jehovah, to admit a Surety in our room; for had he stood to the rigour and severity of the law, he would have demanded a personal satisfaction, without admitting of the satisfaction of a Surety: in which case Adam, and all his posterity, had fallen under the stroke of avenging justice through eternity. But "glory to God in the highest," who not only admitted of a Surety, but provided one, and "laid help upon one that is mighty."

4. Christ, the eternal Son of God, being in "the fulness of time, made of a woman, *and* made under the law," as our Surety, he actually, in our room and stead, fulfilled the whole terms of the covenant of works; that is, in a word, he obeyed all the commands of the law, and endured the curse of it, and thus brings in a complete law-righteousness; by which guilty sinners are justified before God. And this is the righteousness by which we are exalted. By his active and passive obedience, he *magnifies the law*, and *makes it honourable*, and the Lord declares himself to be *well pleased for his righteousness' sake.*

Although Christ obeyed the law, and satisfied justice, and thus brought in an everlasting law-righteousness for a whole elect world; yet the elect of God are never exalted by virtue of this righteousness, till, in a day of power, they be brought to receive it by faith, and submit to it for justification before God. We disclaim that Antinomian error, of an actual justification from eternity, or yet of a formal justification, bearing date from the death of Christ. We own, indeed, with all sound Protestant divines, that it was the pur-

pose of God to justify his elect from eternity, and that all the elect were represented by Christ in his obedience unto the death; but that they are actually justified before conversion, or before their application by faith to the blood of Jesus, is impossible; because the sentence of the broken law stands always in force against them, till they actually believe in the Son of God; for *he that believeth not, is condemned already.* And how can they be both justified and condemned at the same time? Till then, they are *children of wrath even as others.*

6. This righteousness of the Surety is conveyed to us by imputation; as is abundantly plain from many places of scripture, particularly, Rom. iv. 6, 11, 12, 23, 24. God reckons what the Surety did in our room to us; so that his righteousness becomes as much ours for justification before God, as though we had obeyed the law, and satisfied justice in our own person. Now, this imputation of the Surety's righteousness runs principally upon these two or three things: (1.) Upon the eternal transaction between the Father and the Son, in which the Son of God was chosen and sustained as the Surety of an elect world. Then it was that he gave bond to the Father, to pay their debt in the red gold of his blood, saying, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire:—Lo, I come:—I delight to do thy will." (2.) It is grounded upon the actual imputation of our sins to him: "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." There is a blessed exchange of places between Christ and his people: he takes on our sin and unrighteousness, that we may be clothed with the white robe of his righteousness: 2 Cor. v. 21: "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (3.) This imputation goes upon the ground of the mystical union between Christ and the believer. When the poor soul is determined in a "day of power" to embrace the Lord Jesus in the arms of faith, Christ and he in that very moment coalesce into one body. He becomes a branch of the noble vine; a member of that body of which Christ is the glorious Head of eminence, influence, and government. And being thus united to Christ, the long and white robe of the Mediator's righteousness is spread over him; by which he is not only freed from condemnation, but for ever sustained as righteous in the sight of God; 1 Cor. i. 30: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

II. The *second* general head was, to *offer a few properties of this righteousness in which believers are exalted, from whence its excellency will appear.*

1. Then, it is an every way *perfect* and *spotless* righteousness: and how can it be otherwise, seeing it is the righteousness of God? So perfect is it, that the holy law is not only fulfilled, but *magnified* and *made honourable* thereby, Is. xlii. 21. So perfect is this righteousness, that the piercing eye of infinite justice cannot find the least flaw in it: yea, justice is so fully satisfied that God speaks of the soul who is clothed with it, as though it were in a state of innocence, and perfectly freed from sin: "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." Indeed, he beholds many spots in the believer, considered in himself; but not a spot is in him, considered as under the covert of this spotless righteousness.

2. It is a *meritorious* righteousness. *The redemption of the soul is* so *precious*, that it would have *ceased for ever*, unless it had been redeemed by this righteousness; for silver and gold, and such corruptible things, could never do it. Lay heaven, and all the glories of it, in the balance with this righteousness, they would be all light as a feather, compared, with it. Heaven is called a *purchased inheritance*, and this righteousness is the price that bought it. There is such merit in it, that it expiates sins of the blackest hue, and redeems a whole elect world from wrath and ruin. Such is the intrinsic value of it, that, had it been so designed, it was sufficient to have redeemed the whole posterity of Adam, yea, ten thousand worlds of angels and men, upon a supposition of their existence and fall. O with what confidence, then, may a poor soul venture its eternal salvation upon this foundation!

3. It is an *incomparable* righteousness. There is no righteousness among the creatures that can be compared with it. Compare it with our own righteousness by the law, and the apostle Paul will tell us, that he reckoned his Pharisaical righteousness before conversion, yea, his own obedience after conversion, but as *dung*, when laid in the balance with it, Phil. iii. 8. Compare it with Adam's righteousness in a state of innocence, or with the righteousness of the spotless angels, they are but like glow-worms, when compared with this sun: the one is but the righteousness of a creature, but here is "the righteousness of God."

4. It is a *soul-beautifying* and *adorning* righteousness: Is. lxi. 10: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." The poor soul,

that was black, by *lying among the pots*, when clothed with this robe, shines "as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

5. It is an *everlasting* righteousness, as the prophet Daniel calls it, chap. ix. 24. Indeed, this righteousness had no being, save in the purpose and promise of God, till Christ actually appeared in our nature, and satisfied the commands of the law, and demands of justice: however, upon that very being that it had in the purpose and promise of God, it became effectual for the justification of all the Old Testament saints. This righteousness, then, I say, is an everlasting righteousness, both as to the contrivance and duration of it. The contrivance of it bears date from the council of peace in the ancient years of eternity; for the Surety was *set up from everlasting*. And, as it is everlasting in its root, so also in its fruit; for upon this righteousness the saints will stand, and be acquitted at the day of judgment; and upon this bottom they will have their standing in heaven through eternity. The song of the redeemed for ever will be, "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

6. It is a *soul-dignifying* and *exalting* righteousness. Solomon, (Prov. xiv. 34,) speaking of equity in the administration of justice, says, that even that kind of righteousness *exalteth a nation*. I am sure this holds true of the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus, as you see in my text, *In thy righteousness shall they be exalted*. But this leads to

III. The *third* thing in the method, which was to *speak of the believer's exaltation by virtue of this righteousness*. And here I will very briefly show, 1. What evils it exalts him above. 2. What happiness and dignity it exalts him to.

First, What evils it exalts him above.

1. It exalts him above the law as a covenant of works; yea, above both the commanding and the condemning power of that covenant. "Ye are not under the law," says the apostle, "but under grace," Rom. vi. 14. And if they be not under it, it follows that they are exalted above it. Indeed, they are not, and cannot be above it as a rule of duty; no creature can be dispensed from the obligation of yielding obedience to the laws of the great Creator; and the believer, in a peculiar manner, is bound to obey the law of the Creator, in the hand of a Mediator. But considering the law as a covenant of works, demanding the debt of obedience as a condition of life, or threatening eternal wrath in case of disobedience, the believer is indeed exalted above it by the righteousness of Christ. And if the law at any time attempt to bring the believer in bondage to it, he is to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free." The bond

woman Hagar, with her offspring of legal fears and terrors, are cast out by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Gal. iv. 30. If a believer in Christ shall hear the thunderings and curses of mount Ebal, or Sinai, he has no reason to be affrighted; for "Christ," by his righteousness, "hath redeemed from the curse of the law." "Thou art not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest:—but thou art come unto mount Sion,—and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." The believer is "dead to the law by the body of Christ," being married to a better husband, even him that is raised from the dead.

2. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above the world. Rev. xii. 1, the "woman clothed with the sun, *has* the moon under her feet;" which may not only point at the believer's duty to soar heavenward in his affections, but also his privilege in Christ, to trample both upon the frowns and flatteries of this lower world; according to that [declaration] of the apostle, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

3. By this righteousness he is exalted above the power and malice of Satan, indeed, as long as the believer is on this side of Jordan, the devil will be harassing him with his fiery darts, and do his utmost to make him go halting to heaven; but by virtue of this righteousness, namely, the doing and dying of our ever-blessed Surety, the devil is both disarmed and destroyed. The head of the old serpent is bruised; for "through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. And by faith in the blood and obedience of the Lord Jesus, the believer treads Satan under his feet; they *overcome* him *by the blood of the Lamb.*

4. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above death. Perhaps thou art in bondage through fear of death; thy heart is like to faint and fail thee, when thou lookest to the swellings of this Jordan. But take a view of this righteousness, and thou shalt be exalted above the fears of it; for although thou be liable to the stroke of death, yet by this righteousness thou art freed from the sting of it. What is the sting of death? It is sin. Now, Christ has "finished transgression, and made an end of sin," by bringing in "everlasting righteousness." And therefore thou mayest roll that word like a sweet morsel under thy tongue, Hos. xiii. 14: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

5. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above all accusations, from whatever quarter they may come, Rom. viii. 33.

There the apostle gives a bold challenge, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" The challenge is universal in every respect of all accusers: as if he had said, Is there any in heaven, earth, or hell that can accuse them? It is universal in respect of all the accused; for the whole elect of God are comprehended, among whom there have been as great sinners as ever breathed on God's earth. And it is universal in respect of all crimes: it is not said, Who shall lay this, or that, or the other crime to their charge? but *any thing?* and what can be more comprehensive? Now, what is the ground of this bold challenge? It is grounded on the righteousness of Christ: for, says the apostle, "It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, &c."

Secondly, I come to show what happiness or dignity the believer is exalted to by virtue of this righteousness. And, in so many words, I only name these two or three particulars:—

1. He is exalted by it to a state of peace and reconciliation with God: Rom. v. 1: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." God for ever lays aside every grudge in his heart against the soul that is clothed with it.

2. They are exalted by this righteousness to a state of sonship. Christ was "made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," Gal. iv. 4, 5.

3. To a state of fellowship and familiarity with God, and access to him with holy confidence and boldness: Heb. x. 19—22: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." Heb. iv. 14, 16: "Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace." The believer may come, under the covert of this righteousness, with as great freedom to God as his Father in Christ, as ever Adam could have done in a state of innocence.

4. At last thou shalt be exalted to a state of endless glory. For heaven (as I intimated before) is the purchase of the obedience and death of Christ; and faith acted on this righteousness and satisfaction, is *the path of life*, by which we enter into these *rivers of pleasures*, and that *fulness of joy* which is *at God's right hand for evermore.*

IV. The *fourth* thing was the *application* of the doctrine. And my *first* use shall be of *information*, in these few particulars:—

1. Is it so, that in a Surety's righteousness believers are exalted? then see hence, that whatever account the world may make of them, as the dross and off-scouring of the earth, yet they are dignified persons in God's reckoning: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable."

2. See, hence, that the believer has no ground of boasting. Why? Because it is not in his own, but in Christ's righteousness, that he is exalted: "Boasting is excluded," says the apostle. "By what law? of works! Nay; but by the law of faith," Rom. iii. 27. If it were by our own doings or obedience that we were exalted, we would have something to boast of: but since it is in his righteousness that we are exalted, we have nothing whereof to glory in ourselves. There are three questions that the apostle asks, which may silence all flesh, and put all boasters to an eternal blush, 1 Cor. iv. 7: "Who maketh thee to differ? What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" Let believers themselves ask their souls these, or the like inquiries, when pride begins to rise in their breasts.

3. See, hence, what obligation we lie under to the Lord Jesus; who, although he was the great Lawgiver, yet was content to be made under the law; though he was the Lord of life, yet humbled himself unto the death, to bring in that righteousness by which we are exalted. He was content to be "numbered among the transgressors," that we might be counted among the righteous; he was content to become sin, "that we might be made the righteousness of God;" content to become "a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might rest upon us." O admire this love, which *passeth knowledge.*

4. See, hence, a noble antidote against a spirit of bondage to fear. What is it that thou fearest, O believer? Indeed, if thou sin, thou mayest fear the rod of a Father; for he "will visit thy transgression with the rod, and thine iniquity with stripes." But art thou afraid of vindictive wrath? There is no ground for this, (Luke i. 74:) he has "delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear;" that is, without all servile or slavish fear of wrath. Art thou afraid of the tempests of mount Sinai? There is no ground for that, for the storm broke upon the head of thy Surety; and, therefore, thou mayst sing and say, as Is. xii. 1, "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away." Art thou afraid, lest thou be refused access to the presence-chamber? Improve this righteousness by faith, and thou shalt see that the way to the holy of holiest is opened, and get the banner of love displayed over thee. Whenever

the poor believer takes the righteousness of the Surety in the hand of faith, and holds it up to God as a ransom of his own finding, he is so well pleased with it, that his frowns are turned into smiles. In a word, you shall never get rid of a spirit of bondage, till you learn by faith to improve this law-biding righteousness; and then, indeed, legal fears and terrors vanish, like the darkness of the night before the rising of the sun.

Use *second*, of *reproof* to all those who are seeking to exalt themselves by a righteousness of their own, like the Jews, Rom. x. 3; who "went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God." There are some of the hearers of the gospel, who exalt themselves in a negative righteousness: they are not so bad as others: they are free of gross outbreakings, being no common drunkards, swearers, or Sabbath-breakers; and, therefore, conclude that all is right with them. But, sirs, the Pharisee could make this boast: and Paul before conversion could say, that *touching the law* he was *blameless;* and yet, when God opened his eyes, he found himself lying under the arrest of justice; for, "when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died." Others are exalting themselves in a moral kind of righteousness; they not only "cease to do evil," but do many things that are materially good: they are sober, temperate, just in their dealings, liberal to the poor, good peaceable neighbours; they love every body, and every body loves them; they keep the commandments as well as they can: and this is the ground they are standing upon. But I may say to you, as Christ said to the young man, who told him, "All these things have I kept from my youth up, Yet lackest thou one thing." O what is that? say you. I answer, it is to be brought off from the rotten bottom of a covenant of works, that you are standing upon. You want to see that you are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, and that you are legally dead, condemned already, and the wrath of God abiding on you. You want to see, that "all your own righteousness is as filthy rags," and to be made to say, with the church, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Others will go farther than bare morality: they will abound in the duties of religion, read, hear, pray, communicate, run from sermon to sermon, from sacrament to sacrament; and upon these things they rest. All these things are good in their proper places; but if you build your hope of acceptance here, you are still upon a covenant of works bottom, seeking righteousness, "as it were by the works of the law;" and while you do so, you do but seek the living among the dead. All your works are but dead works, till you are

in Christ; and they will but stand for ciphers in God's reckoning, till you be brought to submit to this righteousness, by which alone guilty sinners can be exalted. Others rely upon a mixed kind of righteousness: they will freely own, that their duties and performances will never exalt them into favour and acceptance with God; but, O, say they, it is Christ and our duties, Christ and our prayers, he and our tears and repentance, that must do it. But believe it, sirs, Christ and the idol of self will never cement; these old rotten rags will never piece in with the white and new robe of the righteousness of the Son of God: and if you adventure to mingle them together, "Christ shall profit you nothing," Gal. v. 2—4. Others, again, will pretend to renounce all their works and duties, and own, with their mouths, that it is by faith in Christ only that they hope to be accepted: but though they own this with their mouth, yet still their hearts cleave fast to a covenant of works; they were never "through the law, dead to the law;" and when nothing else will do, they will make their own act of believing the righteousness on which they lean for acceptance; which is still a seeking righteousness in themselves: whereas, if ever we be justified before God, we must have it in the Lord Jesus, saying, "In him" will we "be justified," and "in him alone" will we "glory." Faith carries the soul quite out of itself; yea, faith renounces its own act in the point of justification. All these, and many other rooms and lying refuges, have the devil and our own hearts devised, to lead us off from Christ. But, O sirs, believe it, these are but imaginary sanctuaries, and the hail will sweep them away. Nothing but the doing and dying of the Surety, apprehended by faith, will ever exalt you into favour and fellowship with God, or acquit you from the curse and condemnation of the broken law. And unless you betake yourselves to the horns of this blessed altar, to this refuge of God's appointing, you are undone; and you may read your doom, Is. l. 11: "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow."

Use *third*, of *trial*. Is it so, that in Christ's righteousness we are exalted? O then, sirs, try if you be really exalted by this righteousness.

There is the more need to try this now, that you are to approach the table of the Lord. This righteousness is the wedding-garment, without which you cannot be welcome guests. And if you adventure to meddle with the symbols of Christ's body and blood without it, you may expect that the master of the feast will say to you, "Friend, how camest

thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment?" For your trial, I offer these two or three things:—

1. Hast thou seen thyself condemned by the law or covenant of works? Every man, by nature, "is condemned already," while out of Christ. Now, the ordinary way that God takes of bringing an elect soul into Christ, and under the covering of his righteousness, is by discovering to him the sentence of condemnation that he is under by virtue of the broken law; and thus paves the way toward his acceptance of Christ as "the Lord our righteousness;" for thus it is that "the law is our schoolmaster, to lead us unto Christ, that we may be justified by faith." The Lord leads the sinner to mount Zion by the foot of Sinai: the Spirit's way is, first, to "convince of sin," and then "of righteousness."

2. Has the Lord discovered the Surety and his righteousness to thee? and has thy soul found rest here? Perhaps the law, and its curses, justice and wrath, were pursuing thee; and thou couldst not find a hole in which to hide thy head, "all refuge failed." At length the Lord drew by the veil, and discovered his righteousness as a sufficient shelter, saying, "Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." And thither thou fledst, as to a city of refuge, saying, "This is my rest, here will I dwell." Readily, when it comes to this, there is a little heaven of serenity and joy enters into the soul; so that, if it were possible, it would make heaven and earth to ring with hallelujahs of praise to God for "his unspeakable gift." Dost thou not know, O believer, something of this, to thy sweet experience? This says, that in his righteousness thou art exalted.

3. When an arrow of conviction is at any time shot by the hand of God into thy conscience, by which thy peace and quiet is disturbed, whither dost thou run for ease and relief? The man that is "married to the law," runs to the law for relief and ease: the law is the thing that heals him; his prayers, his tears, his reformation, is that which stops the mouth of his conscience. But, as for the believer, he can never find rest on this side of "the blood of sprinkling," he gets his healing only from under the wings of the Sun of righteousness. No other balm will give him ease, but *the balm of Gilead;* and no other hand can apply it, but *the Physician there.*

4. If you be exalted by imputed righteousness, you will be the real students of gospel-holiness. It is a gross perversion of the gospel, and a turning of the grace of our God into wantonness, for any to pretend that they are justified by the merit of Christ, while they are not at the same time concerned to be sanctified by the Spirit of Christ. Sanctification, or free-

dom from the power and dominion of sin, is a part, and no small part, of that salvation which Christ has purchased by his obedience and death; Tit. ii. 14: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Justification and sanctification go always hand in hand. He who is *made of God unto us righteousness*, is also *made sanctification;* we are *justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* Try yourselves, then, by this, whether you be exalted by this righteousness. Are you delivered from the reigning power of sin? at least, is it so far broken, that it is become your burden, under which you groan, saying, with the apostle, "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Use *fourth* shall be of *consolation* and *encouragement* to believers who are exalted in this righteousness. By virtue of it, O believer, thou art entitled to every thing that possibly thou canst stand in need of. Whatever grace or mercy thou wantest, thou shalt have it, if thou do but improve this law-biding righteousness. Dost thou want pardoning grace to take away the guilt of sin? That is one of the gifts of God, through the righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith; for "he is set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." Dost thou want to have thy peace with God confirmed? Improve this righteousness by faith; for "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Dost thou want "access unto the holiest?" By faith in the blood of Jesus have we *access with boldness.* Dost thou want medicinal grace for healing of soul plagues? Improve this righteousness by faith; for *by his stripes we are healed.* Out of the side of our gospel-altar comes forth living water, that healeth the corrupt and dead sea of indwelling corruption, Ezek. xlvii. 9. This is "the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations." Dost thou want a shadow or covering, to shelter thy weary soul from the scorching heat of divine anger, or of temptation from Satan or tribulation from the world? Improve this righteousness, and sit down under the shadow of it; it is "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Dost thou want courage to look the law or justice of God in the face? Here is a fund for it; for under this covering thou mayst look out with confidence, and say, *Who can lay any thing to my charge?* Dost thou want to have the new covenant confirmed to thy soul? Improve this righteousness by faith; for Christ, by his obedience and death, *confirmed the covenant with many.* His blood is *the blood of the New Testament;* and when the soul by faith takes hold of it,

the covenant of grace is that moment confirmed to it for ever. In a word, by virtue of this righteousness thou mayst come to a communion-table, and to a throne of grace, and ask what thou wilt; our heavenly Father can refuse nothing to the younger brethren, who come to him in their Elder Brother's garment. By virtue of this righteousness, thou mayst lay claim to every thing, to all the blessings of heaven and eternity. Thou didst, indeed, forfeit thy right in the first Adam; but the forfeiture is recovered, and the right restored to thee upon a better ground, namely, upon the obedience and death of the second Adam; and thou comest in upon his right. May not all this then revive thy drooping spirit, and make thee take up that song in the text, *In thy name* will I *rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness* will I *be exalted.*

SERMON VII.

THE HUMBLE SOUL THE PECULIAR FAVOURITE OF HEAVEN.*

When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person.—JOB XXII. 29.

Be ye clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.—1 PET. V. 5, 6.

Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.—PSAL. CXXXVIII. 6.

IT is not material to inquire when, or upon what occasion, this psalm was penned. In the beginning of the psalm, the psalmist enters upon a firm resolution to praise the Lord; and he lays down several excellent grounds of praise and thanksgiving through the body of the psalm. As,

1. He resolves to praise God for the experience he had of his love and faithfulness, in the accomplishment of his gracious word of promise to him, ver. 2: "I will praise thy name for thy loving kindness, and for thy truth: for thou hast mag-

* Preached on a fast-day before the administration of the Lord's supper, at Orwell, July 27, 1721.

nified thy word above all thy name." God has a greater regard to the words of his mouth, than to the works of his hand: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of what he hath spoken shall never fall to the ground.—Some understand this of Christ, the essential Word, in whom he has set his name, and whom he has so highly exalted, that he has given him *a name above every name.*

2. David resolves to praise God for the experience he had of God's goodness in hearing his prayers, ver. 3: "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me: and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." God granted him a speedy answer; for it was in the very day that he cried that he was heard: and it was a spiritual answer; he was *strengthened with strength in his soul.* Would you have soul-strength for the work you have in view? then cry unto him who is the *strength of Israel* for it; for "he giveth power to the faint, and he increaseth strength to them that have no might."

3. He resolves to praise God for the calling of the Gentiles, which he foresaw by the spirit of prophecy, ver. 4, 5. The prosperity and enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, is what fills the believer's mouth with hallelujahs of praise.

4. He resolves to bless God for his different ways of dealing with the humble and the proud, for his grace to the one, and his contempt and rejection of the other, in the words which I have read: *Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.*

It is the first part of the verse I design to insist upon.—Where we may notice,

1. The character of the gracious soul; he is a *lowly* person, one that is emptied, and abased in his own eyes. He sees nothing in himself, either to recommend him to God or man: on which account he is sometimes called *poor in spirit*, Matth. v. 3. He has got something of the mind and spirit of Jesus in him, and so has *learned of him* who is *meek and lowly*, Matth. xi. 29.

2. We have here God's transcendent greatness; he is the *high Lord*, or Jehovah. He is "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, and who dwells in the high and holy place, to which no man can approach." Who can think or speak of his highness in a suitable manner? It dazzles the eyes of sinful mortal worms, to behold "the place where his honour dwells." O how infinite is the distance between him and us! "There are none among the sons of the mighty that can be compared unto him." Yea, "the inhabitants of the earth are before him as a drop of a bucket, and as the small dust of the balance." He is not only *high* above men, but above angels: cherubims and seraphims are his *minis-*

tering spirits. He is "high above the heavens;" for "the heaven," yea, "the heaven of heavens cannot contain him." And "he humbleth himself" when "he beholds the things that are in heaven." O, sirs, study to entertain high and admiring thoughts and apprehensions of the glorious majesty of God: for "honour and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary."

3. You have the amazing grace of this *High God:* though the distance between him and us be infinite, yet he hath a regard to the *lowly.* The apostle Peter expresses this by "giving grace to the humble," 1 Pet. v. 5: God is "good to all;" he distributes the effects of his common bounty to the good and bad, to the just and unjust: but he reserves his special grace and favour for the meek and lowly soul. What farther is needful for explication, will occur in the sequel of the discourse.

Observe that the lowly and humble soul is the peculiar favourite of the high God. *Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly.*

This truth is so evidently founded on the text, that I shall not consume time in adducing other texts of scripture to confirm it. Many that I might name will fall in, in the prosecution of the doctrine; which I shall attempt, through grace, in the following method.

I. I shall give some account of this lowliness and humility, and show in what it consists.

II. Prove, that the humble and lowly soul is the peculiar favourite of heaven.

III. Why God has such respect to the lowly.

IV. Lay before you some marks or characters of the lowly and humble soul.

V. Offer some motives pressing you to seek after it.

VI. Offer a few directions or advices how it may be attained.

I. The *first* thing proposed is, to *give some account of this lowliness and humility, that you may know in what it consists.*— Now, lowliness being a relative grace, we must consider it in a threefold view. Either, 1. As it has a respect to ourselves. Or, 2. As it has a respect to others. Or, 3. As it has a respect to God.

First, I say, it may be considered with respect to ourselves. And so it implies,

1. Low and under-rating thoughts of ourselves. The humble soul has low thoughts of his own person; as David, "I

am a worm, and no man." "I am less than the least of thy mercies," says Jacob. He has low thoughts of his pedigree: he is not like the princes of Zoan, who valued themselves on this, that they were the offspring of ancient kings. Some think there is none like them, because they are of such a clan, and such a family, they have such lords and lairds for their relations. But the humble soul makes little account of all these: "Who am I," says David, "and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" He considered himself as "the degenerate plant of a strange vine;" as a rotten branch of the corrupted and fallen family of Adam: he views "the rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged," saying as in Psal. li. 5: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Again; the man has low thoughts of his own abilities for any work or service he is called to perform in his generation. O, says the lowly soul, I see I am nothing, I can do nothing; I cannot of myself think a good thought. "I am not sufficient of myself to think any thing as of myself," says Paul. I cannot read, hear, pray, communicate, meditate, or examine myself: I see such sin and imperfection attending every duty I set about, as may justly provoke a holy God to cast it back like dung upon my face: I am sure "my goodness extendeth not to him." I see I cannot subdue one corruption, or resist the least temptation, when left to myself; I fall before it, and must needs be carried down the stream like a dead fish, unless the Lord's grace be sufficient for me. Again; the man has low thoughts of his attainments, whether moral or evangelical. O, says Agur, "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy." And Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, did not reckon that he had attained, or that he was already perfect; but he forgets those things which were behind, reaching forth unto things that were before, Phil. iii. 12, 13.

2. This lowliness and humility with respect to ourselves, has in it a self-abhorrence; which is yet a degree beyond the former. The man sees so much sin and guilt, so much emptiness, poverty, and vileness about himself, that, with holy Job, he cries out, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Agreeably to which is that text, Ezek. xxxvi. 31: "Ye shall remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations."

3. It has in it a singleness of heart in the discharge of duty, without vain-glory, or Pharisaical ostentation. It argues a

proud hypocritical spirit, to pray, or give alms, or do any duty, to be seen of men, that we may procure a name to ourselves, or the approbation of others. I am afraid, there are many that attend sermons, and sacraments, with a design to maintain their credit and reputation among their neighbours. Verily, such "have their reward;" but a sorry one it is, when they have got it: the day comes, when this fig-leaf covering shall be torn, and your nakedness, emptiness, and hypocrisy, exposed before men and angels. The humble and lowly Christian will make conscience of duty, although none in the world should see him; yea, the more retired he is, he loves it the better: he cares not though, in things of this nature, his left hand know not what his right hand doth.

Secondly, This lowliness and humility, considered with respect to others, has these things in it:—

1. A preferring of others above or before ourselves. Agreeably to this is the apostolical command, Phil. ii. 3: "Let nothing be done through strife, or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Not that a child of God should think a profane reprobate in a better state than himself; but every true child of God will see so much in himself, as will make him ready to think the worst reprobate as good, or rather better than he is by nature; and he will see, that the least of saints have something in which they excel him. This was the disposition of the great apostle, he looked on himself as the chief of sinners, and the least of the saints.

2. A looking upon the gifts and graces of others without a grudge. He will not say, This or that man darkens me: no; he rejoices to see the gifts and graces of God's Spirit abounding towards others: "Would God," says Moses, "that all the Lord's people were prophets." And then he will shun all vain comparison of himself with others: he will not say, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou;" or, with the proud Pharisee, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican." No, he rather sinks in his own esteem, when he looks on others, as Agur did, Prov. xxx. 2.

3. It has in it an affable, courteous carriage toward all, 1 Pet. iii. 8. Religion does not countenance a sullen, morose, and haughty carriage; no, on the contrary, we are expressly commanded to be "gentle, showing all meekness unto all men."

Thirdly, This lowliness and humility of soul may be considered with reference to God. And so it implies these things following:—

1. High and admiring thoughts of the majesty of God. When God discovers himself, the man sinks into nothing in his own esteem. O, will the humble soul say, with Moses, (Exodus xv. 11,) "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the gods? who

is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

2. A holy fear and dread of God always on his spirit; especially in his immediate approaches unto the presence of God, in the duties of his worship. Says he, The very angels cover their faces with their wings before him, crying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts;" how then shall I, "a man of polluted lips," take his holy name into my mouth? This makes him, with the publican, to smite upon his breast; to stand afar off, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." That is the language of the humble soul, which you have, Psal. xv. 1: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? and, Psal. xxiv. 3: Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?"

3. It has in it an admiring of every expression of the divine bounty and goodness toward men in general, and toward himself in particular. O, says he, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? and, Who am I, that thou hast brought me hitherto? Is this the manner of men, O Lord God? And what can I say more?" as David. And what more can be said! for "praise is silent for thee, O God, in Zion." A silent admiration of the grace and condescension of the great Jehovah, is the highest degree of praise we can win at in this life, while our harps are so mistuned by sin.

4. It has in it a giving God the glory of all that we are helped to do in his service. When the man succeeds in discharging duty in any measure comfortably, he will not sacrifice to his own net, nor burn incense to his own drag: he will not, like proud Jehu, say, "Come, and see my zeal for the Lord." No, that is not the way of the humble soul; he knows that he has all from the Lord, and therefore he will give all the glory to him, saying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be the glory. I laboured," says Paul, "more abundantly than all" the rest of the apostles; "yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me.—By the grace of God I am what I am."

5. It has in it a silent resignation to the will of God, and an acquiescence in the disposals of his providence, let dispensations be ever so cross to the inclinations of flesh and blood. "Here am I," will the poor soul say, with David; "let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." The man sees awful sovereignty in the dispensation, which makes him to say, "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" He sees, that his furnace is not by the ten thousandth part so hot as his sins deserve; and therefore silences

his soul, with the church, saying, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve." He sees, that the cup put into his hand, is far from the bitterness of that cup that was put into the hand of Christ; and this makes him to say, "If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done to" such a *withered* stick as I am? and therefore I will even be *dumb with silence* before him, not opening the mouth, because it is the Lord that doth it.

6. Although all these things I have named be the ingredients and concomitants of true humility; yet I think the very soul and essence of gospel-humiliation lies in the soul's renunciation of itself, and going out of itself, and going in to, and accepting of the Lord Jesus Christ, as its everlasting all; as the all of its light, life, strength, righteousness, and salvation. And I think, that a man never passes the verge of moral humility, till self-righteousness be dethroned, till the high and towering imaginations of the man's own righteousness by the law be levelled by the mighty weapons of the gospel, and he brought to submit to the righteousness of God for justification, which is, in the gospel revealed "from faith to faith."

In a word, the humble and lowly believer is content to be nothing, that Christ may be *all in all* to him: content to be a fool, that Christ may be his only wisdom; content to be, as he really is in himself, a guilty condemned criminal, that Christ may be his only righteousness; content to be stript of his filthy rags, that he may be clothed with a borrowed robe. O says the humble soul, "Surely in the Lord alone have I righteousness and strength: in him will I be justified, and in him alone will I glory," Is. xlv. 24, 25: "Yea, doubtless," says humble Paul, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 8, 9. And so much for the *first* general head, namely, the nature of this lowliness.

II. The second thing proposed was to *show that the lowly and humble soul is the peculiar favourite of Heaven.* This will be abundantly evident, if we consider,

1. That when the Son of God was here in our nature, he showed a particular regard to such. You have a clear instance of this in the centurion, Matth. viii. 8. The centurion there addresses Christ in behalf of his servant, who was grievously tormented of the palsy: Christ, in the 7th verse, promises to come to his house and heal him. Well, see the lowliness of the man's spirit, ver. 8: "Lord," says he, "I am not worthy that

thou shouldst come under my roof." And what a large commendation Christ gives to the man, you see in ver. 10: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And (ver. 13,) he grants him all that he asked, "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." The same we see in the Syrophenician woman, Matth. xv. 27. The lowliness and humility of her spirit made her to submit to all the repulses she met with. When Christ calls her a dog, she takes with it, saying, "Truth, Lord," I am a dog, and shall be content if I may but have a crumb, the dog's portion. And what follows on this? "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Thus, I say, Christ in the days of his flesh, discovered the greatest regard to the humble; and he is the same now in a state of exaltation that he was in a state of humiliation.

When God gives the grace of humiliation, it is a sign that he intends more grace for that soul: 1 Pet. v. 5. *He giveth grace to the humble.* You know men use to lay up their richest wines in their lowest cellars; so God lays up the richest treasures of his grace in the heart of the humble and lowly. And hence it comes, that the humble Christian is ordinarily the most thriving and growing Christian. The humble valleys laugh with fatness, when the high mountains are barren; so the humble Christian is made fat with the influences of Heaven, when lofty towering professors are, like the mountains of Gilboa, withered and dry, because the dew and rain of the graces and influences of the Spirit are suspended from them.

3. Honour, exaltation, and preferment is intended for the humble soul: "Before honour is humility," says Solomon. Psal. cxiii. 7, 8: "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people." They shall be as it were his ministers of state, that shall attend his throne, and have place among them that stand by.

4. God's eyes are upon the humble. Indeed, the eye of his omniscience beholds all the children of men; but his countenance beholds the humble and upright soul: Is. lxvi. 1, 2: "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? for all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." The humble soul is the object of his peculiar love and care: "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in their behalf."

5. Not only God's eye, but his ear is toward the lowly soul: Psal. x. 17. "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." Would you have preparation for a communion-table? Would you be brought to God's seat, and have a hearing there? Then come with lowliness and humility of soul.

6. The great Jehovah, the infinite God, dwells in and with the humble: Is. lvii. 15: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." God has a two-fold palace where he dwells; the one is in heaven, the other is in the heart of the humble Christian. He says of the humble soul, as he said of Zion, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it." And for what end will he dwell in the heart of the humble? It is to revive and comfort them. The new wine of the consolations of God, which are not small, shall be poured into the heart of the lowly soul. He will "comfort them that mourn in Zion, *he will* give them the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

7. As God dwells with the humble, so the humble shall dwell with God in glory for ever: Matth. v. 3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit," (which is the same with the lowly spirit,) "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." They shall sit not only at his by-table here below, but be admitted to sit down at the high table of glory, and to eat and drink with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, yea, with the King of glory himself. It is the humble that surround the throne above, as you see, Rev. iv; they take their crowns off their heads, and cast them down before the Lamb, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power." Thus, you see that the humble soul is the peculiar favourite of the high God.

III. The *third* thing in the method was, *to inquire why God has such a respect to the lowly.*

Ans. 1. God has such a respect to the lowly, not as if this frame of soul were meritorious of any good at his hand, but because this is a disposition that best serves God's great design of lifting up and glorifying his free grace. What think you, sirs, was God's design in election, in redemption, in the whole of a gospel-dispensation, and in all the ordinances of it? His grand design in all was to rear up a glorious high throne, from which he might display the riches of his free and sovereign grace: this is that which he will have magnified through eternity above all his other name. Now, this lowliness and humility of spirit best suits God's design of exalting

the freedom of his grace. It is not the legalist, or proud Pharisee, but the poor humble publican who is smiting on his breast, and crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," that submits to the revelation of grace. And truly I never think a man truly humbled till he be brought so far off his law-bottom, on which he stands by nature, as to lie down like a worm at the feet of sovereign grace, heartily content to be indebted to free grace for life, righteousness, pardon, and salvation.

2. God has such respect to the humble soul because it is a fruit of his own Spirit inhabiting the soul, and an evidence of the soul's union with the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone we are accepted.

3. This is a disposition that makes the soul like Christ; and the more a person resembles Christ, the more God loves him. We are told, that Christ was *meek and lowly; he* did *not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets:* though he was the *brightness of his Father's glory*, yet he was content to appear *in the form of a servant; though he was rich, yet he* was content to *become poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.* Now, the humble soul, being the image of Christ, who is the *express image of his Father*, God cannot but have a regard to him.

IV. The *fourth* thing in the method was, to *lay before you some marks by which you might try, whether you be among the humble and lowly, to whom God has such a regard.* You have especial need to try this now, when you are to make a solemn approach to God at his table. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." If you want this lowly frame of spirit, you cannot be welcome guests at the supper of the great King.

Now, for your trial, I shall suggest these things following.

1. The lowly soul is one that is many times ashamed to look up to heaven under a sense of his own vileness and unworthiness; as we see in the poor publican, and in David, Psal. xl. 12: "Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me." Indeed, when by faith he looks to his cautioner, and his everlasting righteousness, his mediation and intercession, he has boldness to enter into the holy of holies, and can come with boldness to the throne of grace: I say, when he *looks* to Christ, he is *not ashamed*, Psal. xxxiv. 5. But when he looks to himself, as he is in himself, he is even "ashamed and confounded" before the Lord, and ready to cry out with the prophet, Is. vi. 5: "Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips:" how shall I speak unto *the King, the Lord of hosts?* or how shall I appear before him?

2. He is one that is many times put to wonder that God has not destroyed him. He wonders that God has kept him out of hell so long, or that he has not let loose his hand, and made an utter end of him: and therefore he is much in adoring mercy, and long-suffering patience, with the church, Lam. iii. 22: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

3. He is one that is most abased under the receipt of the greatest mercies and sweetest manifestations. We see this in the instance of David; when God promised to build him a sure house, and gave him a promise of the Messiah to spring of his loins, the man is not lifted up, but, on the contrary, is filled with wonder that God should stoop so far toward the like of him: "Who am I," says he, "that thou hast brought me hitherto?" The nearer that the humble soul is admitted to God, the higher that he is lifted up the mount of enjoyments, he falls lower and lower in his own esteem. When Abraham was admitted to plead with God on the behalf of Sodom, Gen. xviii. how does he sink into nothing in his own eyes? "Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes."

4. He is one that renounces the law as a covenant, and disclaims all pretensions to righteousness from that quarter: "I through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." O, says the man, when he looks upon the law of God in its spirituality and extent, what can I expect from that quarter but wrath and ruin? yea, I am condemned already by the law; and if God mark iniquity, according to the tenor of it, I am undone for ever: Psal. cxxx. 3: "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand?" So, then, try yourselves by this: Has a discovery of the law of God, in its spirituality, made you to own and acknowledge that all your own righteousness is but *as filthy rags, dung and loss?*

5. He is one that has high, raised, and admiring thoughts of Christ, and of his law-biding righteousness. As for the person of Christ, O how the humble soul admires that: the lower he falls in his own esteem, the higher does Christ rise in his esteem. In Psal. lxxiii. David is laid so low in his own eyes, that he cries, (ver. 22,) "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee." Well, while it is thus with him, what are his thoughts of Christ? See it, ver. 25, 26: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." And as for the righteousness of Christ, O how does his soul admire that, and clasp about it! O, says he, I have no works,

no righteousness of mine own, to commend me to God, or with whom to stand before him: but he is "the Lord my righteousness; *and* I will go on in his strength, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only."

I might give you several other marks of this lowliness of soul. I shall only name these two or three farther. As,

1. He is one that looks on sin as his greatest burden, saying, with David, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me." And particularly indwelling corruption, the fountain of sin; O how does he mourn and groan under that, saying, with Paul, Rom. vii. 24: "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

2. He is one that values himself least, when others value him most. O, says he, others see only my outside; but if they saw the swarms of abominations, that I see and feel in my own heart, I would be a terror to them. When the multitude is crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David, he is riding, meek and lowly, upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass."

3. He is one that is not puffed up with the falls of others, like some, 1 Cor. v. 2; but rather the falls of others contribute to humble and empty him the more of himself. He sees, from the out-breakings of [sin in] others, what is in his own heart, how much he is obliged to God for restraining grace: for if the bridle were but laid on my neck, will the humble soul say, I would be soon carried into the same excess of riot with others.

4. The humble soul is one that is thankful for little; he will not despise the day of small things: like the woman of Canaan, he is content with the crumbs that fall from the children's table. The humble soul is content with a bare word from the Lord. O, says David, "God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice." He thinks much of a single word from the Lord's mouth, and waits for it, as the servants of Benhadad, that catched at every word that dropped from the mouth of the King of Israel.

5. The humble soul is content and desirous to know what is God's will, that he may do it. Paul is no sooner humbled, but he cries, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Give grace to obey, and command what thou wilt.

V. The *fifth* thing in the method was, to *offer some motives to press and recommend this lowliness and humility of spirit.*

My *first* motive shall be drawn from the excellency of the grace of humility; and its excellency especially appears in two things:—

1. It assimilates the soul to Christ. Men are inclined to imitate the example of the great ones of the earth; but here is the most noble pattern that ever was, even an incarnate Deity, saying, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly."

2. It is the distinguishing character of a Christian. The people of God are ordinarily called the *humble* and *meek of the earth.* A proud Christian is a contradiction; for pride is just an antipode to true religion. O what a difference did it put between the Pharisee and the publican! The proud Pharisee brags to God, as it were, of his good works; "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." But the poor publican stands afar off, as if the Majesty of Heaven were about to strike him dead; and yet the publican goes home to his house justified, while the other is rejected.

Mot. 2*d*, Consider how reasonable this lowliness and humility of soul is. Whatever way we view ourselves, we shall find it highly reasonable. It is highly reasonable, whether we look to ourselves in particular, or the evils of the land and day in which we live.

1. I say, take a view of thyself, man, woman, and thou shalt find ground of humiliation. For,

1*st*, Thou art a creature sprung of earth, whose "foundation is in the dust," and cannot pretend to a higher extract than the very earth under thy feet. Hence is the exhortation of the prophet Jeremiah, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." Earth in thy original, earth as to the supports of nature, and shall return unto the earth in the end.

2*dly*, Thou art not only a creature, but a frail creature whose breath is in thy nostrils. Thou standest continually upon the brink of an endless eternity. And as there have but a few years passed over our heads since we arose out of the dust; so, ere it be long, death will sweep us off the stage; and then all our beauty, strength, stature, and other bodily excellencies, will be covered with rottenness. In Is. xl. 6—8, you see it is the cry both of heaven and earth, that *all flesh is grass.* Solomon, giving a description of the life of man, sums it all up in two short words: "There is a time to be born, and a time to die." He leaps over the intermediate distance between man's birth and his burial, as a thing that was not worthy of his notice. He is born, and then he dies. The moment of time between the womb and the tomb is so short, might he say, that it does not deserve to be named.

3*dly*, Thou art not only a frail, but a sinful creature, wholly overrun with that loathsome leprosy, "from the crown of

the head to the sole of the foot." O sirs, what reason have we to be humble, who have defaced the image of God, cast dirt on all the divine attributes, trampled his law and authority under our feet. The sinner has swallowed a cup of deadly poison, which will infallibly destroy him, if infinite mercy and free grace prevent not. What ground has he then to be proud! O, says the prodigal, "I have sinned against heaven, and therefore am no more worthy to be called thy son," or to have the room of a *hired servant* in the family.

4*thly*, Thou art not only a sinful creature, but an impotent creature, that can do nothing in order to thy own help and relief. If God had not "laid help upon one that is mighty," we had been all of us this day sinking under the fiery mountains of eternal vengeance and wrath. Such an impotent creature is sinful man, that, as to natural things, he cannot make one hair of his head white or black, or add one cubit to his stature. And so helpless is he, as to spiritual and eternal concerns, that he can no more change the wicked habits of his heart, or the wicked ways of his life, than the Ethiopian can change his colour, or the leopard his spots.

5*thly*, Thou art a variable, changeable, and inconstant creature; liable to many alterations, both as to thy outward lot, and thy inward frame. The man that is in greatest esteem to-day, may have his reputation ruined by the envenomed tongue of calumny to-morrow. In a word, thy health may soon be changed into sickness, thy riches into poverty, thy strength into weakness, thy beauty into ugly deformity. And as for thee, believer, though thy state be firm like the mountains, yet thy frame is but a changeable thing. Perhaps thou mayest be saying with David one day, "By thy favour my mountain stands strong;" and the next day crying out, "I am troubled with the hiding of his countenance." Although, perhaps, the candle of the Lord may be shining on thy tabernacle, yet in a little thou mayest be going "mourning without the sun."

2. This lowly frame of spirit is highly reasonable, if we look abroad in the world, and particularly the land in which we live. O what great cause of deep humiliation have we this day before the Lord, when we take a view of the abounding profanity of our day! All ranks have "corrupted their way;" a flood of atheism and wickedness, Jordan like, has broken down all its banks. Have we not reason to be humbled for the universal barrenness that is to be found amongst us, under the drops of the glorious gospel? May not the Lord say to us, as he said of his vineyard, Is. v. "I planted thee in a fruitful soil;" I took all imaginable pains upon thee, by ordinances, by the rod, by mercies and crosses; yet,

after all, "when I looked that they should bring forth grapes, behold, they brought forth wild grapes?" Again; have we not reason to be humbled for the lamentable divisions that are to be found among us? "Ephraim against Manasseh, Manasseh against Ephraim, and both they together against Israel." Because of *the divisions of Reuben*, there are *great thoughts of heart*. Church and state are divided. And, among other divisions that have been of late, we are like to have a new division in point of doctrine.

There is a handful of ministers, who have lately put in a petition to our National Assembly, in favour of some of the pure and precious truths of the gospel, which they conceive to be injured by an act of Assembly. There is a mighty cry raised against them, both in pulpits and in common conversation, as if they were *the troublers of Israel*, New-schemers, Antinomians, and what not. Many strange errors are fathered upon them, of which they never once thought. I shall be far from bringing a railing accusation against them who study to wound their reputation, and to mar the success of their ministry: for I look on many of them as great and good men. But if they be helped to bear reproach for the name of Christ, and for the cause of his truths, with humility and lowliness of mind, the Lord in his own time will find out a way to bring them forth to the light, so as they shall behold his righteousness. And although their reputation should sink for ever in the world, under the load of calumny that is cast upon them, I hope they think it but a small sacrifice for the least truth of God, which is of more worth than heaven and earth. However, I say, this, among other things, is ground and cause of humiliation in our day, that any of the precious truths of Christ should be under a cloud, and that we should be divided in our sentiments respecting them. Have we not reason to be deeply humbled for our woful defections and backslidings, which are the ground of our divisions? We are departed from the Lord, and the Lord is in a great measure departed from us. What a woful withering wind has blown upon God's vineyard in the land! We are "fallen from our first love," our former zeal for God and his precious truths, and the royalties of our Redeemer's crown. And is there not a lamentable decay as to the power and life of godliness, which has dwindled away into an empty form with the most? To conclude, it is not with the nobles, gentry, ministers, or people, in Scotland, as once it has been; and the worst of it is, that though it be so, though gray hairs are here and there upon us, yet we do not perceive it: we "make our faces harder than a rock, and refuse to return" to the Lord. But I haste to a close.

Mot. 3*d*, Take a view of the noble patterns of humility that are set before us for our imitation. The saints militant are patterns of it. Abraham, the father of the faithful, in the forecited xviiith of Genesis, with what humility does he address himself to God! "Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes." And his grandson, Jacob, follows his footsteps herein, "I am less," says he, "than the least of thy mercies." In a word, Job, David, Isaiah, Paul, and all the "cloud of witnesses," have cast us a copy of humility. Again; the saints triumphant cast us a copy of this grace: they take their crowns off their heads, and cast them down at the Mediator's feet, ascribing the glory of all to him, saying, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Again; angels are patterns of it: they do not look on it as a disparagement to be ministering spirits to the heirs of glory. With what humility do they cover their faces with their wings in the presence of God! Is. vi. Again; Christ is a blessed pattern of this grace: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly:" he has left us an example, *that we should follow his steps* therein. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Though he was the high God, yet he "took upon him the form of a servant." And therefore "let the same mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus," Phil. ii. 5. In a word, the infinite Jehovah, the eternal God, casts us a copy of humility: for "he humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth;" and, as you see in my text, *though he be high, yet has he respect unto the lowly.* And are not all these patterns worthy of our highest imitation? And if all this will not prevail, I offer,

A *fourth* motive, Consider the evil and danger of the sin of pride, that lies directly opposite to it.

1. It is loathsome in the sight of God; he cannot endure to look on it; he beholds it *afar off.* In Prov. vi. 16, it is set in the very front of these things that the Lord hates: "These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination to him:" and the first of them is a *proud look.* God hates every sin, but he proclaims open war and hostility against the proud.

2. The evil of it appears, in that it is a sign of a rotten heart within: Hab. ii. 4: "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him." As humility and sincerity, so pride and hypocrisy go hand in hand.

3. It is the fertile womb of many other evils. It is the spring of division: Prov. xiii. 10: "Only by pride cometh con-

tention." As I was saying just now, there are a great many divisions amongst us at this day. Church and state are divided, congregations and families are divided, ministers and people are divided: What is the matter? Pride lies at the bottom. If our proud hearts were but so far humbled, as to confess our faults one to another, our divisions would soon come to an end. Again; pride is the mother of error and heresy: a root of bitterness that is troubling our Israel at this day. When men, especially clergymen, who have all a conceit of infallibility with them, have asserted any thing that is amiss in point of doctrine, their pride will not allow them to retract. Truth itself must rather fall a sacrifice, than their reputation sink. Pride of reason is the very soul of the Socinian, and pride of will the soul of Arminian errors, and pride of self-righteousness is the source of that legal spirit which so much prevails in our day. Again; pride is the spring and root of apostacy; for, says Solomon, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Peter's pride was the immediate forerunner of his denying his Lord and Master. But, again, consider that God has a particular quarrel with the sin of pride: he has threatened to "scatter the proud, in the imagination of their own hearts." You may read a lecture of God's controversy with the proud, Is. ii. 11—13, &c. "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down.—The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low." And, ver. 17: The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." O what ruin has the sin of pride brought along with it!

1*st*, It turned angels into devils, and threw them from heaven into hell; "being lifted up with pride, they fell into condemnation," as the apostle insinuates. God could not endure pride to dwell so near him; and therefore he tumbled them down from heaven, and laid them "under chains of eternal darkness."

2*dly*. It was pride that has wrecked all mankind, when it creeped out of the higher into the lower Paradise. "Ye shall be as gods," said the serpent; and immediately the bait was catched at; though, in the event, it made them more like the devil than God.

3*dly*, We might trace the story of what ruins it hath brought with it upon the ungodly world. Pharaoh refuses to bow so far to the command of God, as to let Israel go; saying, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him:" And therefore he and his host shall "sink like lead in the mighty waters."

Haman's pride brought him to an ignominious end: though he was his prince's greatest favourite to-day, yet he was hanged to-morrow on the gallows which he had set up for poor Mordecai. Nebuchadnezzar proudly vaunts himself of his royal palace. "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" and immediately he is turned out from the society of men, and made to eat grass with the oxen. Herod, after his fine oration, receives that applause from the people without any check, "It is the voice of a God, and not of a man; and immediately the angel of the Lord smites him, and he is eaten of worms."

4*thly*, As God has punished it in the wicked, so he has shown his resentment against it in his own children. And pass who will, they shall not miss a stroke, if their hearts be lifted up within them: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." David's pride prompted him to number Israel, that he might make his boast that he was king over so many thousands; and thereupon a raging pestilence, in three days' time, sweeps away seventy thousand of Israel. Hezekiah's pride made him to show his treasure of precious things to the king of Babylon's ambassadors; and therefore his posterity and his treasures must be carried away to Babylon out of their native land. In a word, though you were as the signet on God's right hand, you shall not escape a stroke of fatherly wrath and anger, if you allow pride to lodge in your hearts. That threatening shall surely take place, both among friends and enemies, Prov. xxix. 23: "A man's pride shall bring him low." And if it miss his person, it shall fall heavily on his family: Prov. xv. 25: "The Lord will destroy the house of the proud."

VI. The *sixth* and *last* thing I proposed was, *to offer a few advices, in order to your attaining this lowly frame and temper of soul which the high God doth so much regard.*

1. Go to the law as a schoolmaster; read the ten commandments, and Christ's spiritual commentary upon them, Matth. v. View the law of God in its utmost extent and spirituality; for *it is exceeding broad.* This would make the proudest heart to lie in the dust: Rom. vii. 9: "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The feathers of his pride and legal righteousness soon fell, when the law in its spirituality was set before his eyes.

2. Get Christ to dwell in your heart by faith; for the reigning power of this evil is never broken, till Christ come by the power of his Spirit, bringing down the towering imaginations of the heart, and erect his throne there. The more of Christ,

the more humility; and the less of Christ, the more pride. When the Spirit of Christ enters into the heart, he stamps the likeness and image of Christ there. O then, if you would have this humility and lowliness of spirit, "lift up the everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in:" he brings a glorious retinue of graces with him, of which this is one of the first.

3. Be much [employed] in viewing the glorious perfections of the Majesty of heaven, as they are displayed in the works of creation and providence; but especially as they shine in the face of Jesus Christ, and the glorious work of redemption through him. When the prophet Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, and his train filling the temple, he cries out, "Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips." See Job xlii. 5, 6. "I have heard of thee," says he, "by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

4. Be much in viewing "the rock whence ye were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye were digged;" I mean your original corruption and depravation; how you are "conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity." And O how much of this cleaves even to believers themselves, while they are on this side of eternity! There is a *law in the members* continually *warring against the law of the mind.* This laid the great apostle Paul in the dust, notwithstanding his high attainments.

5. Be much in viewing the vanity of the creature, and all things below. "Vanity and vexation of spirit" is written in legible characters upon all things under the sun. "The fashion of this world is passing away." Be much in viewing the bed of the grave, where you must lie down shortly, and where rottenness and corruption shall cover you: let this make you say, with Job, "to corruption, Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister." View an awful tribunal, and endless eternity, that is to follow on the back of death, where you and I shortly shall stand panels and receive a sentence from the righteous Judge, which shall determine our state for ever.

6. *Lastly*, Be much in eyeing those patterns of lowliness and humility which I already mentioned. God, angels, and saints, have cast you a copy of it. But especially be much in viewing the humility and humiliation of the Son of God, which is proposed as the great pattern, Phil. ii. 5—8: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

SERMON VIII.

THE NECESSITY AND PROFITABLENESS OF GOOD WORKS ASSERTED.*

Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.—2 Cor. vii. 1.

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.—Rev. xxii. 14.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.—John vii. 17.

PREFACE.

The following discourse is one of those for which I am become a debtor to the public, on the occasion mentioned in the preface of that upon Rev. iii. 4. Although I am abundantly sensible of my lame management of this important subject; yet I am not conscious of swerving, in any one point of doctrine, from the word of God, and the approved standards of this church: and, if in the least jot I have departed from them, either in this or any other of these sermons charged with heterodoxy, I am so far from pretending to infallibility, that I hope I shall never be ashamed publicly to retract what, upon conviction, shall be found to be amiss.

I look upon it as one of the most difficult things that belongs to us ministers, in the dispensation of the everlasting gospel, so to divide the word of truth, as to deliver it in the order and connexion in which God has laid it in the new covenant. Indistinct views here cannot miss to lead both ourselves and hearers into a maze and labyrinth of confusion, and exceedingly mar the sweetness of divine truth, with the success of the gospel. Every truth of God, even in itself, and abstractly considered, is precious; but the beauty, lustre, and sweetness of divine truth is never seen or felt, until the truth be known "as it is in Jesus." All the truths of divine revelation meet in him, as the beams in the sun, or as the spokes of a wheel in their centre; insomuch, that, if any truth of God be handled, or any duty of the law inculcated, abstractly from him, it is taken out of its proper place where God has set it, and, consequently, cannot miss to lose its savour and beauty: and, therefore, it was not without ground the apostle expressed himself, as we have it, 1 Cor. ii. 2: "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." He is the glorious "foundation laid in Zion," and "another foundation can no man lay;" and if, in building, we do not keep our eyes continually on this *chief corner stone*, we cannot shun to make very confused and irregular work. In a particular manner, when

* Preached at Kirkaldy April 12, 1724.

we inculcate *good works* upon our hearers, if we do not lead them, in the first place, to *work* that *great work of God*, namely, to "believe on him whom he hath sent," we do but press them to build castles in the air, which fall down as fast as they are reared up. All our works will be found to be but empty ciphers in the day of the Lord, if this foundation be not first laid. The *root* on which they grow, namely, that of the old Adam, being *rottenness*, the *blossom* cannot miss to *go up as the dust*.

It is the ruin of thousands in the visible church, that whenever the law of God has pricked or wounded their hearts, and brought them under any concern for salvation; that, being "married to the law," as a "husband," they run to it for relief. Hence it is the ordinary dialect of awakened sinners, before the revelation of the remedy, "What shall we do?" or, "What good thing shall we do to inherit eternal life?" And, accordingly, they fall to doing and working; and there they rest; by which means, these very duties, which should lead them to Christ, prove a bar and hinderance of their coming to him. But, since the fall of Adam, the law was never given to man with a design that he should rest or stay in it, but, that man, by the law, might be carried forth to him, who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." I own, that they who rest in the law and its works, may find some sort of peace and ease for awhile; but true, solid, and lasting peace, can never be found on this side of Christ.

We do not read of any plaster that the stung Israelites were to make use of for their healing, but only *looking* to the *brazen serpent*. If they had made a confection of the best herbs in the wilderness, or a plaster of all the sovereign ingredients in the world, and with it heaped up mountains of prayers, or poured out seas of tears, all would not have helped, if they had not *looked* to the *brazen serpent*. God had appointed *that* as the *only way of relief;* and, therefore, nothing else could perform the cure. So, here, God hath set up his Christ, as the *only way of life;* he hath lifted him up upon the pole of the gospel, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And though we should spend our whole time and strength, in praying, mourning, and other acts of obedience, all would be of no avail, unless we made use of God's remedy, in a way of believing, and that is, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Isaiah xlv. 22.

But, say you, by this means we may lay aside praying, reading, hearing, and other duties of obedience, altogether. I answer, By no means. I do not advise you to leave off duties, but only as a plaster for healing your wounds, or as a ground of acceptance. Duties, indeed, are subservient to the cure, but they themselves are not the cure. For instance, prayer is a *seeking* of the cure, but not the cure itself: in reading and hearing, we are directed *how to come at* the cure, but these are not the cure. We would reckon it a piece of prodigious folly, for one in distress to reckon himself healed, merely upon his seeking and getting a physician's advice, though he never apply the remedy prescribed. By our works of obedience, before conversion, like the man lying at the pool, we only study to have a deportment suitable to those who wait for divine mercy; and by our obedience, after conversion, we only express our gratitude for the cure, which he, in his sovereign grace has wrought, by the Spirit's application of the blood of Jesus: but still these works of obedience, whether before or after conversion, are not the cure. It is a known maxim among sound divines, *That, being justified, we work, but we do not work that we may be justified.* So, then, let us never put our duties in the room of Christ. The man that rests in any thing on this side of Christ, will at last rest on this side of heaven. All our duties

and works of obedience will be but as ropes of sand, or chains of glass, too brittle to draw our souls up to glory.

It is very observable, that the order and connexion betwixt duty and privilege is quite inverted in the covenant of grace, from what it was under Adam's covenant. In the last of these, duty was the foundation of privilege; but, in the first, namely, the new covenant, privilege received by faith is the foundation of duty. In Adam's covenant, man was first to do his duty; and on that ground, in a way of pactional debt, he might expect and plead the reward of life. But now, man having forfeited life by the breach of that covenant, God will have him to take life as a free gift through Christ; and thus to set his seal to his record, "that he hath given to us eternal life, in his Son Jesus Christ;" and thereupon, as a fruit and evidence of life received, he will have us perform the duties of his law.

It is pleasant to observe, that, when God published the law at Mount Sinai, he ushered it in with the great new covenant grant, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Here is the object and foundation of their faith; and upon this he founds their obedience to the precepts of the moral law. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," &c. If the commandments of the moral law had been set first, and God had said, "Do these things, and I will be your God;" this had been a pure covenant of works, indeed. But, first, he reveals himself as *their God in Christ*, a reconciled God and Redeemer; and, upon this footing, presses obedience to his commandments. So that, I say, the order of doctrine laid in the dispensation of the gospel, is first to lead the sinner by faith to Christ, and to God in him; and upon this to inculcate obedience to the law as *a rule of duty*. This order of doctrine I find nicely observed by the Westminster Assembly, in compiling our excellent Confession of Faith and Catechisms; where they tell us first *what we are to believe*, and then *the duties which God requires of man* The same method we find the apostle Paul observes in most of his epistles. So that this is no new scheme, but *the good old way*. And if this order of doctrine be inverted, we disturb the comely order which infinite wisdom has laid in the dispensation of the new covenant, and infallibly return back to an old covenant of works.

This is the order I have aimed at in the following discourse: whether I have hit it right, or not, I leave it to others to judge. I do freely own that, ever since I knew any thing of Christianity, I never found greater difficulty in any thing, than to bring my heart to fall in with this order of the new covenant. And even after the soul, as to the main, is brought to acquiesce in this new method of salvation; yet there is so much of the old Adam, I mean of a legal spirit, in us, as is still leading us insensibly back to Adam's covenant, namely, to expect mercy, grace, and glory, on the score of something wrought in us, or done by us. And our words, who are ministers, do many times betray the legality of our hearts: which I speak in a way of regret, from my own sad experience, not in a way of reflection upon others. And I make no doubt, but such as have a true taste of the gospel, may find something of this in the following discourse, though I have endeavoured to shun it as much as I could.

If, by the publication of these imperfect scraps, any shall be provoked to handle this, or any of the other subjects, with more accuracy, which may be easily done, I shall heartily rejoice. And if either the church of God, or any particular soul, shall be edified by reading this, or any other

of the quarrelled sermons, he owes no thanks to me, but only to that God, who, by his overruling providence, "makes the wrath of man to praise him:" and, for my own part, I desire to believe, "that the remainder of his wrath he will restrain."

PORTMOAK, June 6, 1726. E. E.

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men.—TIT. III. 8.

THE apostle having, in the preceding part of this chapter, particularly from the 4th verse, and downwards, given a brief summary or epitome of the doctrine of the gospel, and of the free grace of God towards sinners, through the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ; he proceeds, in this 8th verse, to shut up the whole with a serious advice unto Titus, what use to make of the doctrine of grace among his hearers; namely, upon that footing, to urge them to the study of practical godliness as great gain: *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly*, &c.

Where these things are worthy of consideration.

1. We have the apostle's epilogue, or conclusion, with which he shuts up that grave and weighty subject, which he had been treating in the preceding verses, *This is a faithful saying*. Some, indeed, understand this as a preface to what follows; but I find the generality of interpreters rather connect the asseveration with what went before, and particularly with what the apostle had asserted in the verse immediately preceding; to wit, "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life;" and then immediately adds, *This is a faithful saying*. The apostle foresaw, by the spirit of prophecy, that the doctrine of grace would meet with strange opposition in after ages of the world; and that opposition was already begun in his own day, as appears from his epistle to the Galatians; and therefore ratifies it with the greater solemnity, *This is a faithful saying*. From whence I observe, by the by, That as ministers of Christ are to declare the whole counsel of God, so there are some truths that need to be more vouched and dwelt upon than others; particularly truths that are more fundamental, and most controverted by gainsayers. Hence we find, there is sometimes an oyez, or a watchword, added to some truths, requiring our more diligent attention, and serious entertainment. Thus the apostle here, considering the opposition the doctrine of grace would meet with from men of legal spirits, adds this

word of attention to the close of it, *This is a faithful saying.* Ministers are watchmen, and set for the defence of the truth; and therefore, when any truth of God is in danger, they are to double their guard, and to support these truths that are most attacked by the enemy, that so they may not "fall in the streets." And if it be the duty of ministers to teach, inculcate, and support those truths that are controverted or contradicted; surely it is also the duty of people to study these truths, and the arguments that support them, that so they may be in a capacity to distinguish between truth and error, and "to give a reason of the" faith and "hope that is in them." The Bereans have a high commendation given them; they are called men of noble and excellent spirits, on this account, that they would not swallow down, by an implicit faith, the doctrines taught even by the apostles themselves: no, but they tried even the apostolic doctrine by the standard of the law and testimony. And this is a thing not only commanded and commended in the scriptures of truth, but most agreeable, likewise, to the dictates of right reason. How is it possible that people can obey the command of "contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints," if they do not understand the doctrine of faith, particularly these doctrines that are in danger of being wrested from them? Ministers are called "stewards in the house of God, and stewards of the mysteries of God." Now, you know it is very much the interest of the house or family, to see that their steward feed them with sound and wholesome food, otherwise they may come to swallow a stone instead of bread, or a scorpion instead of a fish. We call you to examine and try our doctrines at the bar of the word; and if they will not abide the trial there, let them sink and perish for ever. There is always ground to suspect any set of men who decline or shun any fair trial of their doctrines; for "he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." But,

2. In the words we have an apostolic command given to Titus, and in him to all ministers of the gospel: *These things I will that thou affirm constantly.* The word in the original rendered *affirm*, is borrowed from the practice of those who, when they buy or sell a thing, oblige themselves to maintain the claim and title against all law-suits or entanglements.—Titus, and other ministers, are not only to teach the doctrines of the gospel, but to confirm and make them good against all the cavils or questions that may be moved about them.

3. In the words we have a particular doctrine which the apostle recommends to be taught by Titus, namely; "That they who have believed in God, should be careful to main-

tain good works." Where notice the foundation of all good works, and that is *believing in God;* to wit, in God as he is manifested in Christ, "God reconciling the world to himself;" for out of Christ he cannot be the object of faith, but of terror, to a guilty sinner. Now, this believing in God is the very foundation of all good works: for "without faith it is impossible to please God:" and they that have believed, are enjoined *to maintain good works.* The word in the original is borrowed from the military, particularly such as set themselves at the front of the battle, and march forward to encourage the whole army to follow them. "Believers," would the apostle say, "must not only do good works, but must be patterns and examples thereof to others;" according to that injunction of Christ; "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." But the import of this you may meet with more fully afterwards.

4. We have a very cogent and weighty reason why believers are to maintain good works; why, says he, "These things are good and profitable unto men." The apostle, in the 5th verse, had secluded good works from any causality or influence on our justification or eternal salvation: "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us." Now lest any should allege, that, in that case, good works were altogether useless, he adds this as a caveat, and says, "Do not mistake it, for although your good works be not profitable for justification, yet they are good and profitable to men on many other accounts:" of which we may hear likewise afterward.

The doctrine I notice from the words is this:—

Doct. "That as faith, or believing, is the source of good works; so these good works, which are the fruit of believing, are good and profitable to men." Or, take it thus: "That they who have truly believed, are to be careful to maintain good works, these being good and profitable unto men." The foundation of this doctrine from the words is obvious.

In speaking to it, I shall, through divine assistance, observe the method following:

I. I would speak a little of those good works, which they who have believed in God are called to maintain.

II. Of that believing in God, which is the source and fountain of good works.

III. Show that these good works, flowing from faith, are "good and profitable unto men."

IV. Apply the whole.

I. I say, I would *speak a little of good works.* Where I would show,

1. What works they are that may be called *good works.*

2. What is imported in *maintaining good works.*

First, What sort of works they are that may be called *good works.* In general, then, you would know, that, considering the law as a covenant, or an abstract rule of righteousness, as contradistinct from the gospel, there are no works done by men that can be called good works; for "there is none that doth good" (in this respect,) "no not one: In many things we offend all." The most blameless and perfect actions of the most consummate believer that ever drew breath in God's air, while in this state of sin and imperfection, cannot perform a work legally good, because of the mixture of sin that attends his best performances. And hence it is, that we find the saints in scripture owning, that they could not *stand, if God should mark iniquity;* that *all their righteousness is as filthy rags;* that their *goodness extendeth not to him.* O sirs, if God should "lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet," we, and all our good works, would be for ever rejected, like *reprobate silver.* And therefore we have little reason to think or imagine, that God is a debtor to us for any thing we do, or that our good works do procure the favour of God, his acceptance, or a title to life. But our works are called *good works*, as having a respect to the law, considered as a rule of duty, in the sweet hand of a Mediator. He makes his "yoke easy, and his burden light," to his people, by accepting of their weak efforts and endeavours, through his perfect obedience and satisfaction, as good, though attended with manifold imperfections. Now, to constitute an action good in an evangelical sense, there are several things requisite:—

1. To make a work a good work, it must be done by a good and holy person, renewed by the Spirit of Christ, and justified by his merit. It is beyond all dispute and controversy, that the person must first be accepted of God, and reconciled to him in Christ, before the work can be accepted. Abel's person was accepted of God, and then his offering. And hence it is, that "the sacrifices of the wicked" are said to be "an abomination to the Lord." The very "ploughing of the wicked is sin." The matter is this: God is angry with their persons, and he hates and loathes them while out of Christ; and therefore nothing that comes from them, or that is done by them, can be acceptable. And therefore, I say, to make works good and acceptable to God, they must be done by a person that is in a gracious and reconciled state.

2. To make a work a good work, it must be a thing required and called for by the law of God. The reason of this

is plain, because it is God's will that makes any thing sin or duty; and if it be not agreeable to his revealed will, he may say unto us, "Who hath required this at your hand?" Hence Christ taxes the Pharisees, saying, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." And therefore, if you would do any work acceptable to God, you must take care, that the thing you do be required and commanded of God. Indeed, there are some actions that are of an indifferent nature; that is, God has left men at a perfect liberty, whether to do them or not. But then it should be remembered, that these actions, in the case of offence or edification, cease to be indifferent, and fall under some commandment of the moral law. In which case Paul says, (1 Cor. viii. 13,) "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth." It was a thing indifferent, whether Paul did eat flesh or not; but when offence was like to follow his eating, he would abstain from it as much as though it were expressly forbidden in the law of God, because, in that case, it became a breach of the law of love and charity.

3. To make a work a good work, it must be done out of a right principle. It must be done out of a principle of faith, as was already hinted; for no work can be acceptable without this, Heb. xi. 6. And there is a twofold faith requisite in a good action. (1.) A general faith of persuasion, that the thing we do may be done lawfully. And of this the apostle speaks when he says, "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin," Rom. xiv. 23. And, (2.) A particular justifying faith, believing the acceptance of what we do, only through the Lord Jesus Christ, and his merit and mediation. Again; a good work must be done out of regard to the authority of God commanding: and that not simply with a respect to the authority of a God Creator; for thus a Heathen, or a Mahometan, may obey God, and do good actions; but out of a respect to the authority of a God in Christ. We must eye the authority of the Creator in our obedience, as coming in this blessed channel, otherwise it is not a true Christian obedience: for we Christians are "under the law to Christ;" and when we are so, we are "not without law to God," seeing God hath commanded us to "hear his voice," and to "obey him," as our "Lord, King," and "Lawgiver." And "whatsoever we do in word or deed," we are to "do all in the name" and authority "of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God by him." And, farther, good works must be done with simplicity and godly sincerity, avoiding hypocritical and Pharisaical ostentation in the discharge of duty: for "his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him," Hab. ii. 4.

4. To make a work a good work, it must be done to a right end. It must be done to the glory and honour of God, this being the principal and ultimate end of our being, according to that direction of the apostle, 1 Cor. x. 31: "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." It must be done as a declaration of our gratitude to God for redeeming love. We are "bought with a price;" therefore we are to "glorify him in our bodies and spirits, which are his." They must be done, also, with a view to the edification of others, Matth. v. 16. But these, and many other things to this purpose, will fall in to be spoken to more particularly, when we come to the fourth general head proposed in the prosecution of the doctrine.

Secondly, I come to inquire what may be the import of that phrase of being *careful to maintain good works?* To this I answer briefly in the following particulars.

1. It implies a diligent attendance to the rule of the word; according to that of David, Psal. cxix. 9: "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." The man makes God's statutes "the man of his counsel." And when he is called to this or that piece of service, he takes advice of his counsellors, whether he may do or forbear. They are "a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path." As Israel looked to the pillar of cloud, and of fire, in all their motions and travels, for direction through the wilderness; so the gracious soul looks to the law or testimony in every step of his way towards the Canaan that is above.

2. It implies an anxiety or solicitude of soul, to have his actions managed and ordered according to that rule. It is the very desire of his soul, to be found in the Lord's way; as it was with David, Psal. cxix. 5: "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" He desires not only to have his outward walk, but the inward frame of his very soul, all the thoughts of it, moulded in an agreeableness to the law of God: Psal. cxix. 80: "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed." Such is his concern for this, that he lays up the law of God in the very cabinet of his heart, as an antidote against sin: Psal. cxix. 11: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

3. It implies a holy watchfulness against all the temptations, motions, or occasions of sin, either in thought, word, or action. "I said, I will take heed to my ways," says David. The man sets a watch over his heart, according to that command, "Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life." He sets a watch over his eyes, and makes

a covenant with them; and over his lips, lest sin should either enter, or go forth by that door.

4. It implies an embracing of every opportunity for doing good works that God puts into his hands, and improving the same. When God puts the opportunity or talent in his hand, he studies to lay it out for the Master's use, and his own and others' profit and advantage; according to that direction of Solomon, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

5. It implies a going on, or progress in the duties of obedience, without returning back again to the old trade of sin. The Christian is not like the "dog returning to his vomit," or "the sow that was washed to wallow in the mire;" no, but "the righteous holdeth on his way;" he "maintains good works;" he "waxes stronger and stronger;" he "forgets the things that are behind, and reacheth forth unto things that are before."

6. The word here, as I hinted in the explication, implies an exciting or influencing of others to the study of good works. The word, as I said, is borrowed from captains or commanders, who go in front of the battle, encouraging the soldiers of the army to follow their example. The believer studies to exhibit a good copy, and to recommend holiness and good works to others, by his practice; so that others, seeing his good works, may be encouraged to do the like.

7. *Lastly*, This maintaining of good works must needs depend upon doing all by faith, and improving the strength of Christ: "I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." But this leads me to the *second* general head.

II. The *second* general thing proposed in the method, was, to *give some account of this believing in God, which is given as the character of those who maintain good works.* Here I would, 1. Show what believing in God implies. 2. Give some of the qualities of this believing. 3. Show the influence that it has upon good works.

First, What believing in God imports.

1. It imports the knowledge of God, in a suitableness to the revelation which he has made of himself to us, through Christ, in the gospel. I own, that the very Heathens may know his eternal power, by the things that are seen; but there is no saving knowledge of God by a guilty sinner, but as he is in Christ: 2 Cor. iv. 6: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." And whatever fine notions or speculations people may have of God, and of his excellencies, as

discoverable in the works of creation and providence; yet, if their notions of him be not regulated by the gospel-revelation, and if this revelation of a God in Christ be not opened by the Spirit of wisdom, rending the veil of ignorance and unbelief that is upon the mind by nature, there can be no saving, satisfying, or sanctifying knowledge of God, and consequently no true faith, or believing. Indeed, a rational knowledge may produce a rational faith, and an historical knowledge may produce an historical faith; but it is only a saving illumination of the mind with the knowledge of a God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, that can produce a saving faith. And this knowledge is so essential to faith, or believing, that we find it frequently in scripture called by the name of knowledge: "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many. This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

2. To believe in God, implies a firm and steady assent to the truth and veracity of God speaking in his word. It is to believe and credit what he says, on his own testimony. This is called a "receiving the record of God, a setting to the seal that God is true, a believing of the report of the gospel." When the man hears "the word of the truth of the gospel," he is ready to cry out, with the apostle, "It is a faithful saying." This word is established in the heavens; yea, "heaven and earth shall pass away," but this word of God "endureth for ever."

3. To believe in God, is to trust that this word of a reconciled God in Christ is not only true in the general, but that it shall be true to me in particular, that it shall be made good to me. He takes up God in Christ as a promising God, promising peace and pardon, grace and glory, in Christ; and he takes up the promise, as coming to him in the offer of the gospel, as the immediate ground and foundation of his faith: Acts ii. 39: "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Now, I say, the man taking up the word of grace and promise in this way, trusts the promiser for the performing thereof to his own soul: he takes it as a sufficient security for all promised good, saying, Here is my "substance: This is all my salvation." Hence faith acted upon the promise of God is called "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. And this is what many notable divines, both abroad and at home, call the assurance of faith, or the appropriating persuasion of faith; because there is not only a persuasion of the truth of the promise, but a persuasion of it, with application and appro-

priation of it to the man himself in particular. And this is all I say at present about the ingredients of faith in God. I come,

Secondly, To give some of the properties and qualities of it. And there are these few following that I mention:—

1. It is a staying, quieting, or composing grace. It will settle the mind under the greatest storms and disorders: Is. xxvi. 3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." Hence the believer, under clouds of desertion, temptation, and affliction, is directed to "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God," Is. l. 10.

2. It is a receptive or a taking grace. It gives nothing to God, as other graces do; but only takes or receives from the Lord: it does not come to give, but to get. Hence it is expressed by a *taking;* Rev. xxii. 17: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely;" or, which is the same thing, a *receiving*, John i. 12: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. Faith is, in scripture, sometimes compared to the eye: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," Is. xlv. 22: You know the eye, when it beholds external objects, does not give any thing to what it beholds, but only takes in the image or impression of what it sees, and conveys that to the mind: so, faith does not add or give any thing to God; it only beholds him, and the discoveries he has made of his grace, and glory, and love, and faithfulness, in Christ, and impresses the soul with them. Hence we, by "beholding his glory as in a glass," are said to be "changed into the same image," 2 Cor. iii. 18.

3. Although it be only a receptive grace with respect to its object, yet, where implanted, it is a mighty operative grace with respect to its subject: for, as you may hear afterward, it influences every good word and work; and therefore all true obedience is called "the obedience of faith." So that an idle or inactive faith is but dead, like the body without the soul.

4. It is a radical or rooting grace. It roots the soul, as it were, in the root of Jesse, the plant of renown. And itself is the root of the other graces of the Spirit, by which they are made to grow and blossom. As the tree strikes its roots into the ground, and from thence draws fatness, sap, and moisture, conveying a digested nourishment to the several branches, by which they are made to bud and flourish, and bring forth fruit; so, faith ingrafts and unites the soul to Christ, deriving spiritual sap, and moisture, and fatness, by which every other habit of grace is drawn forth to a lively exercise.

5. It is a most humble and lowly grace. It carries the

man quite out of himself into Christ for all. Hence it is called a "submitting unto the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. A very strange expression! Shall it be reckoned submission for a condemned criminal to receive a pardon? Is it submission for a naked beggar to receive a robe? Yet thus it is: the pride of our hearts will not stoop so low, as to be obliged to the Son of God for righteousness, pardon, and life. And this is the very thing that makes faith, or believing, so difficult. What difficulty is there for a naked man to receive a garment to cover him? What difficulty for a poor man to receive a gift? What difficulty for a weary man to sit down and rest? But the thing that makes this difficult is, the pride of our hearts, together with our ignorance both of our malady and remedy. Now, I say, faith breaks the pride of the heart, and submits, or lies down, as it were, at the foot of sovereign grace, heartily content to be indebted to Christ for all. The man is content to be a fool, that Christ may be his *wisdom;* content to be a criminal, in the eyes of law, and justice, and conscience, that Christ may be his *righteousness;* content to own himself a polluted filthy sinner, that in him he may be *sanctified;* content to own himself a slave, that he may be a free man in Christ and share of his *redemption.* This is true gospel-humility, indeed, and what the high and lofty One regards: Is. lvii. 15: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,—I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." "Though God be high, yet hath he regard to such as are" thus "lowly."

6. It is an elevating and ennobling grace. Though it be an humbling grace, yet it is a most exalting grace; it elevates the soul above this lower world, it looks down on it as a dunghill, and mounts up with wings toward the land that is very far off; it enters within the veil, and takes a view of things invisible, and particularly of an unseen Christ, and triumphs in him: "Whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." It mounts so high, that it will even dare to sit down upon the throne with Christ in glory: hence we are said to "sit together with him" by faith "in heavenly places."

7. It is a cheering and a comforting grace. We are "filled with all joy and peace in believing. I had fainted," says David, "unless I had believed."

8. It is a bold and confident grace. Hence we read frequently of the "*boldness of faith*," and the "*assurance of faith*," Heb. iv. 16; Heb. x. 22. It is disputed at this day, whether assurance be of the essence of faith. I incline not to call it by the name of *assurance*, because some cavil at that word; but

I choose rather to call it by the name of the *certainty* of faith. I do not design to enter much upon that controversy at present: all I say of it is only this; that there cannot miss to be a certainty in faith, because doubts and fears vanish before it. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" How faith can fill the soul with "joy and peace," yea, with "joy unspeakable, and full of glory," if it have no certainty in it as to these things in which it rejoices, is what I think no man is able to account for. How a man can rest on Christ, and apply him and his salvation to himself in particular, and yet not believe "that he shall be saved through the grace of Christ," to me appears a paradox. I do not say, that faith excludes doubts out of the believer; but I say, that faith excludes doubting out of its own nature. Light excludes darkness out of its nature; and yet there may be much darkness in a room where there is some light. Certainty may be of the nature of faith, although there be much darkness and doubting in the believer, through the prevalence of ignorance and unbelief that remains in him, and will remain, while he is clogged with a body of death. So, in like manner, love excludes enmity out of the nature of it; and yet, in the believer, who loves Christ, there is much remaining enmity, by which his love is exceedingly weakened: so the certainty of faith is weakened through the remaining unbelief that is still in the believer's heart. But now here it would be remembered, that, although there be a certainty in the nature of faith, a certainty of trust, rest, or confidence in God, grounded on his promise in Christ; yet there is a great difference betwixt this certainty of faith, and the certainty or assurance of sense or reflection, which some call a *discursive assurance:* for the certainty of sense is built upon the soul's own experience or feeling; but the certainty of faith is built on the promise, and Christ in the promise. The first sort of assurance is not at all in the nature of faith; but the last sort of assurance or certainty, is what is, and has been owned, by all the stream of reformed divines, both at home and abroad, ever since our happy reformation from Popery. I shall only add here, that the difference betwixt the certainty of faith and of sense, is very evident and obvious; for the one has a respect to what the soul feels and sees at present before it; but the other, to wit, the certainty of faith, has a respect to things promised, which are not seen or felt otherwise but as they lie in the womb of the promise, and in the veracity of the promiser. To give you a few instances: By the certainty of faith, Moses, and the believing Israelities, knew, before they came out of Egypt, that they would have a passage through the Red sea as through dry land; but, by the cer-

tainty of sense, they knew it, when they saw the waters file off on every hand, making a lane for Israel to pass on. By faith acted on God's promise, they knew that the walls of Jericho would fall down at the sounding of rams' horns; but, by the certainty of sense, they knew it, when they saw them actually fall flat before them. By the assurance of faith Abraham believed, without staggering, that he should have a son, because God had promised it; but, by the assurance of sense, he knew it, when he got Isaac in his arms. By the assurance of faith, Abraham, and the Old Testament worthies, believed that the Messiah was to come in the fulness of time; but, by the assurance of sense, John the Baptist, and others, knew it, when they saw him manifested in the flesh, and beheld his glory, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." By the certainty of faith, we under the New Testament are persuaded and assured, that Christ is to come again the second time; but, by the certainty of sense, we shall know it, when we shall see him descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and trump of God. By faith we are assured of the resurrection of the dead, and of our own resurrection in particular; but, by sense, we shall be assured of it at that day, when the voice shall be heard, commanding the sea to give up its dead, and the earth to give up its dead. Thus, I say, there is a great and visible difference between the certainty of faith, and the certainty of sense. By faith acted upon the promise, I believe the remission of sins, and of my sins, through Christ; but, by the certainty of sense, I am assured of this, when God by his Spirit seals his pardon on my soul with a sensible smile of his countenance. By faith I believe God to be my God, because he has said it in the covenant, "I will be their God;" but, by the certainty of sense, I believe this, when he reveals and manifests himself to my soul. By faith, grounded on the promise of eternal life in Christ, I believe my own salvation in particular; but, by the certainty of sense, I believe, because I have believed, or because God has discovered himself to be a saving God to me, by the operation of his Spirit upon my soul. So, I say, faith is a bold and confident grace; it intermeddles with, applies, and appropriates, and makes use of the goods of the testament of Christ as its own, the testament being confirmed in the blood of the Lamb; and this testament it not only pleads, but rejoices in. The language of faith is not properly, *May be*, or, *Peradventure it shall be so;* though I grant that a weak faith may many times lurk under a may be: but, I say, let faith be stripped of its incumbrances, or of those things that are opposite to its nature; let it but get a full view of the promise, and faithfulness of the

promiser, it will set its foot on unbelief, and all discouragements, saying, It shall be, because God hath said it. Thus you see faith expresses itself; Mic. vii. 7—10: I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." And ver. 8: "When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." And, ver. 9, at the close: "He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness."

9. It is a very quick-sighted grace. It can see relief coming to the soul at a vast distance, saying, "I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." It can look through frowning dispensations, and see love in the heart of God.

10. It is a strengthening and establishing grace: "Except ye believe, ye shall not be established." It is by faith that we are "strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Faith, in a manner, wields the very arm of Omnipotence, and cries with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

To conclude, faith is a patient grace; it waits on the Lord till his time come for the accomplishment of his promise. Unbelief is hasty: "I said, in my haste, All men are liars: but he that believeth, shall not make haste." Its language is, "I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation. —The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

Thirdly, I now proceed to inquire what influence this faith has upon good works? *Answ.* There are several things that are inlaid with the very nature and exercise of faith, which cannot miss to influence, holiness and good works. As,

1. True faith unites the soul to Christ, who is the very root and fountain of all holiness. "From me," saith the Lord, "is thy fruit found.—Except ye abide in me, and I in you," to wit, by faith, "ye cannot bring forth much fruit." Indeed, a person in a state of nature may bring forth many fruits that are morally and materially good; but, without union with Christ, we can do no work that is spiritually good and acceptable; for, "as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." We may as well "gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles," as expect works that are spiritually good from a person out of Christ. Why? The reason of it is plain: his "root" is but "rottenness," while he grows upon the old Adam: and therefore his "blossom shall go up as dust." While a man is growing upon the old Adam, he is married to the law as a covenant; and therefore all his works are but dead works: and can ever dead works be acceptable to

the living God? We must be "dead to the law by the body of Christ," and "married" to that better husband, before we can "bring forth fruit unto God," Rom. vii. 4.

2. Faith works by love; and "love is the fulfilling of the law." Love to God in Christ is the next and immediate fruit of true and saving faith. Now, the heart being oiled with the love of God in Christ, this makes the man to abound in good works: "The love of Christ constrains us," says the apostle. Love makes a man to keep God's commandments. Love will make a man to run through fire and water for him. "Many waters cannot quench love," &c. Cant. viii. 7. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Rom. viii. 35.

3. Faith is a shield to quench the fiery darts of Satan. When temptation without, and corruption within, are forming a conspiracy against the work of grace in the soul, by which the whole work is endangered, then faith breaks the plot, and countermines it. When Adonijah's conspiracy had carried the whole strength of the kingdom of Israel, it was broken by making application to David: "Hast thou not said, that Solomon shall reign?" So, when temptation and corruption have carried the matter to a great height, the conspiracy is broken by faith's application to Christ: O Lord, hast thou not said that grace shall reign, and that "sin shall not have dominion over me?" And thus the soul is made to go on its way, "rejoicing to work righteousness."

4. Faith applies the promises of the new covenant and fetches grace from thence, for obeying the precepts of the law. So that faith, as it were, travels between the precept and the promise: it carries the man from the precept to the promise, and from the promise to the precept. As, for instance, when the law says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind;" faith runs to the promise, where God has said, "I will circumcise their hearts to love me." When the law says, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and make him thy dread;" faith, in that case, runs to the promise for the grace of fear: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Does the law say, "Thou shalt know the Lord," and acknowledge him for "thy God?" Well, faith looks to the promise, "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord." Does the law oblige us to "keep all his commandments?" Faith runs to the promise, and applies it: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes."

5. Faith has an influence on good works, as it beholds the authority of a God in Christ interposed in every command-

ment of the law. The eye of natural reason may see, as was hinted, the authority of a God Creator, as is plain in the case of the Heathens; but it is only the eye of that faith, which is of God's operation, that can behold the authority of a God in Christ, and receive the law out of his hands. In this respect we are told, "that no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." And when the law is received from his mouth, it does not reflect dishonour upon God as a Creator. O! when a God in Christ is viewed by faith, the soul cannot but cry out, "He is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth; His commandments are not grievous; His yoke is easy, and his burden is light:" for I see it no more a covenant of works to me, but a rule of obedience, sweetened with redeeming love and grace. Thus, you see what influence faith has upon good works.

III. The *third* general head proposed in the method was, to *inquire in what respect good works are profitable to men.*

But, first, I would show you, negatively, in what respects they are not profitable to men.

1. Then, They are not at all profitable to men for justification or acceptance before God: for "by the works of the law," says the apostle, "shall no flesh be justified. Our justification and acceptance, both as to our persons and our works, go upon quite other ground; viz. upon the everlasting righteousness, the obedience and death, of the Son of God, as our surety, apprehended by faith. It is *in him* "that all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory." Indeed, the generality of men, that are trained up in a Protestant country, will tell you, that they do not expect to be justified by their own righteousness, but only by the righteousness of Christ. But alas! how few are they that really and actually submit to this righteousness! There is a cursed bias in the heart of man to lean to something in himself. Is not this the language of thy heart many times? O! if I had such a frame, such a melting heart, such love, such a degree of humility and obedience, then I think God would accept of me, and love me, on that account. But, sirs, let me tell you, that it is not on account of any thing wrought in you, or done by you, that God accepts of you, but only on account of the doing and dying of the Son of God. I may say to all legalists, that are looking for acceptance with God on the ground of the law, and their own obedience, as the prophet Isaiah says to a set of men in his day, Is. lix. 6: "Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works." So, then, good works are not at all profitable to righteousness and justification. Hence, (Is. lvii. 12:) "I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works, for they shall not profit thee."

2. Good works are not at all profitable to found a claim or title to heaven, or yet to any blessing and mercy promised in the whole covenant of grace; for heaven, and all the blessings that lie on this side of it, come to us in the way of a free gift. God gives Christ, his unspeakable gift, and with him he freely gives us these things: The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." I own, indeed, that in God's covenant of promise there is a connexion and order established, for conferring of these promised blessings to us; so that when God gives one thing, it is a pledge of another thing coming; when he gives grace, to be sure he will give glory; when he gives a mourning heart, it is a sign that comfort is coming, because that is God's method and way, "to give the oil of joy for mourning, and to revive the heart of the humble." But though the tears of gospel-mourning be a sign and evidence of comfort coming, yet they are not the condition for which God bestows comfort. So God has connected faith and salvation together in the covenant; so that "he that believeth, shall be saved:" but it is not our faith that entitles us to salvation; no, but faith unites the soul to Christ, in whom we recover our right to the forfeited inheritance. It is by virtue of the soul's union with Christ by faith, that it is entitled to all the promised blessings. Hence all the promises are said to be "in him yea, and in him amen." There is no promise in the Bible, but it is made in the first instance to Christ as the head, and in him to the members of his mystical body. Just as it was in the first covenant, to wit, the covenant of works; the promise of life, upon condition of perfect obedience, was made directly to Adam as the covenant head, and, in him, to his posterity: so in the new covenant, of which Christ is the head, the promise of life, and every thing belonging to it, is first made to him; and, in him, to all his spiritual seed and offspring: and in this respect, all the promises are in him *yea* and *amen*. Christ is the first *heir of all things;* and the title of the younger brethren is only through him, or by virtue of their union with him. Thus, good works, I say, are not profitable to men, in order to found a title to heaven and eternal life.

3. As our good works are not profitable to men in any of these respects, so neither are they profitable to God, as though he had any advantage by them: Job xxii. 2, 3: "Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?" Hence David acknowledges, that "his goodness extended not to the Lord." Alas! we are ready to think, that God is much indebted to us, when

we do this or that. Have we fasted and prayed, mourned and repented, kept the Sabbath, attended ordinances, and performed this or the other duty; and yet will not God be pleased with all? No, no; do not mistake it; you that bring these things as a price in your hands, to recommend you to God, all your duties are but like the *cutting off of a dog's neck*, and the *offering of swine's blood* upon his altar. And, therefore, he will say to you, as he said to Israel, Is. i. 11: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me."

But now, you may perhaps say to me, By this way of speaking you make good works profitable for nothing at all. What strange doctrine is this? I answer, although they be not at all profitable in any of these respects, but wholly unprofitable and pernicious; yet good works, when done out of a principle of faith, are really profitable on many other accounts. As,

1. They are profitable, as they are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: Jam. ii. 18: "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." And, ver. 22: "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" From whence it is plain, that works are profitable, as the fruits and evidences of true faith. We know that there is sap and life in the tree by the fruits, the leaves, and blossoms, that it puts forth; so we know our faith to be a true faith, by the fruits of holiness and good works. Yea, our good works will be brought forth, at the last day, as the evidence of our faith; and therefore it is said, Rev. xx. 12; "They were judged according to their works." Works are not a ground of confidence, but an evidence; they are not the foundation of faith, but the fruits of it: and the believer's comfort may be increased by the sight of good works, though it is not built on them. In a word, they manifest our claim and title to the crown, but do not at all procure or merit the same. *We have peace with God*, and with conscience, by the righteousness of Christ; and by holiness, or good works, our peace of conscience is maintained and evidenced to us.

2. They are profitable, as they are testimonies and evidences of our gratitude to God for the wonders of his grace and love manifested in and by Jesus Christ. Hence says David, Psal. cxvi. 12, 13: "What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." 1 Pet. ii. 9: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvel-

lous light." The works of obedience, are, as it were, thank-offerings to God for the benefits bestowed on us; and when men have not a conversation suitable to their mercies, they despise the goodness of God. Hence is it that the Lord complains of such, saying, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise."

3. They are profitable and needful for strengthening our assurance: 1 John ii. 3: "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." And, ver. 5: "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." 2 Pet. i. 5, to ver. 10. From all which you see, that assurance is strengthened and confirmed by the fruits of holiness and good works. We read, that "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:" and it is well, when, with the witness of the Spirit, we have that of water, that is, sanctification and purity of heart and life.

4. They are profitable, as they are edifying to others: Matth. v. 16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Christ does not there encourage vain-glory and boasting, but proposes the true end of our visible or external holiness, namely; that others may have matter of praise to God for his grace abounding toward us; and that they may be also engaged to the study of holiness and practical religion by our example. It was a saying of Hierom, "That he loved Christ, dwelling in Austin." We ought so to walk, as others may love Christ dwelling in us. It is an exhortation to believing wives, 1 Pet. iii. 1, so to walk, that their husbands may be *won* to the Lord. So that, I say, good works are edifying to others.

5. They are profitable, as they serve to adorn the profession of the gospel: 1 Tim. vi. 1: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour; that the name of God, and his doctrine, be not blasphemed." Tit. ii. 5, 9—12. Thus, they serve to adorn religion. The church is the Lord's garden; and you know the fruitfulness of the trees of the garden serve exceedingly to adorn it; whereas barrenness, or bad fruit, is a disgrace, and makes the garden to be ill-spoken of. When men, professing godliness, have not a suitable walk and conversation, it makes enemies and strangers to conclude, that all religion is but a fraud or cheat, and that there is no reality in it; whereas, a fruitful conversation stops the mouths of the enemies of religion: 1 Pet. ii. 15: "So is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

6. They are profitable, as they manifest our implantation or ingrafting into Christ: Eph. ii. 10: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

7. There is an analogy and proportion between good works and glory: Rom. vi. 22: "But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." But I do not insist.

IV. I proceed now to the *last* thing in the method, which was the *application*.

First, This doctrine may serve for *information*, in these two or three particulars:—

1. See hence the right way to attain true morality, or how you may come to do good works to purpose: you must *believe in God*, and by faith be united to the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle, Rom. vii. tried to do good works by the strength of nature, but it would not do with him; for "the commandment which was ordained to life, *he* found to be unto death." And I do verily believe, that none shall ever make a better hand of it than he did, try it who will, by the strength of nature. The law, of itself, only irritates corruption, instead of mortifying it: for, says he, "when the commandment came, sin revived." Like a serpent that is chilled with the cold, it lies as if it were dead; but when brought to the heat, it revives and spits venom: so corrupt nature, when brought to the commandment, or the commandment brought to it, it revives and gathers strength, and discovers more malignity than it did before: "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, works in us all manner of concupiscence."

2. See hence, how unjustly ministers, who endeavour to preach the doctrine of the grace of God, or who preach down works in the matter of justification, are aspersed as enemies to good works and holiness, or as if they separated between faith and good works. This was a calumny cast upon Christ himself, which made him offer that vindication, Matth. v. 17: "I am not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil the law. This was a charge against the protomartyr Stephen, Acts vi. 13, that he "spoke blasphemous words against the holy place, and the law." And this also was a charge against the apostle Paul and his doctrine: hence it is that he anticipates that objection, Rom. iii. 31: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

3. See hence the folly of those who, under a pretext of grace, or of faith in Christ, give way to licentiousness, as many carnal gospellers do. Whatever pretences such may have to faith, yet they are strangers to it, and never felt the effect

of divine grace on their own souls; otherwise it would "teach them, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." It is no new thing for corrupt nature to abuse the doctrine of the grace of God. This was an evil the apostle complains of in his day; hence he takes notice of some who argued, that they might sin, that grace might abound, Rom. vi. But though the doctrine of grace may be abused, while it lies floating in the head; yet when it gets into the heart, it engages to holiness in "all manner of conversation." In a word, though the doctrine of grace may be abused, the habit and exercise of grace cannot be abused to sin.

Use 2d of *exhortation.* Is it so, that it is they, and they only who believe, that do and can maintain good works? Then my *first* exhortation is, O believe in the Son of God. We read of a company, John vi. 28, who came to Christ, asking him, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Christ's answer is, ver. 29, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." This is the great and fundamental precept that lays the foundation of all true obedience; for all true obedience is *the obedience of faith.* And therefore study to obey that great commandment, 1 John iii. 23: "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." But I will not enlarge upon this use at present.

The *second* exhortation is to them that have believed, that you may "be careful to maintain good works." Time will not allow me to enlarge upon this either: only consider, by way of motive, shortly, that, as every person of the adorable Trinity bears a share, according to their particular economy, in the work of man's redemption; so there is an obligation, arising from every one of them, tying us to the study and maintenance of good works. The Father has elected you from eternity, and loved you with an everlasting love. And why did he elect you? It was to holiness or good works: Eph. i. 4, 5: "He hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." The Son has redeemed us with his blood, not only that we should be liberated from wrath, but that we should be holy, and abound in the fruits thereof: Tit. ii. 14: "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The Holy Ghost is our Comforter, and he dwells in us as in a temple; and therefore we are bound and obliged not to grieve him: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of re-

demption. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." Thus, I say, every person of the adorable Trinity, and their relation to us, obliges us to the study of good works. Again; the covenant of grace, and the promises of it, not only encourage, but oblige us to the study of good works: 2 Cor. vii. 1: "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

But I must of necessity pass other motives, and conclude the whole with a few directions or advices. Take these following:—

1. If you would do good works, take care that your state be right, I mean, take care that you have a station in Christ the second Adam; for, without this, you cannot bring forth fruit, either pleasing to God, or profitable to your own souls. Thou art but a thorn and thistle in God's vineyard, whilst thou art in a state of nature; and therefore there is no good fruit of obedience that can grow upon thee. See that you have the Spirit of Christ within you; and for this end plead that promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 27: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." It is the Spirit of the Head that animates all the members of the body: he helps our infirmities in prayer, and in other good works also.

2. In all your works or duties of obedience, keep your eye upon the *chief corner-stone* that God hath *laid in Zion*. You know a mason or builder cannot miss to make very irregular work, if he do not keep his eye upon the foundation and corner-stone of the house; his work will be marred. Just so it is here; if we do not keep our eye on Christ by faith, as the foundation laid in Zion, the foundation of acceptance, the foundation of assistance, we can never yield acceptable obedience to God. And when either the merit or Spirit of Christ go out of sight, immediately the heart turns legal, by which all our duties are spoiled and marred.

3. Study always to keep up the lively impression of this awful truth upon your hearts, that God could find matter of condemnation against you, not only from your worst sins, but from the best of your duties. The most holy and heavenly man that ever breathed, durst not adventure the salvation of his soul upon the most heavenly thought that ever he conceived. Due impressions of this will help to keep your hearts right in point of righteousness; so as not to build your acceptation before God upon your good works, but only on the works of the Son of God. The apostle, I find, has a notable word to

this purpose, 1 Cor. iv. 4: "I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified." The apostle's meaning is (*I know nothing by myself,*) as if he had said, 'I am not conscious to myself of any unfaithfulness in my ministry, or trust that God has reposed in me; my conscience does not smite me for neglect of duty, (*yet am I not hereby justified.*') As if he should say, 'Though I have laboured more abundantly than all the rest; though I have fought the good fight, finished my course, kept the faith, (*yet am I not hereby justified;*') all this will not make a righteousness by which I may expect to be justified or accepted of God. No: he accounted all as dung and loss, in the point of justification, "that he might be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness." So that you see, even in the presence of your best graces, works, and duties of obedience, free grace through imputed righteousness, is to be your only sanctuary and city of refuge.

4. Whenever you are helped to do any thing in obedience to the law, still remember what you do is done in a borrowed strength, and that will keep you humble; for it is a vain spirit that is proud of what is borrowed: 1 Cor. iv. 7: "who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" And therefore do not "sacrifice to your own net;" for it is not free will, but free grace, to which thou art beholden. "It is God which worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

5. Beware of legal ends and motives in the performing of good works.

Quest. What are these? I answer,

1*st*, It is a legal end in obedience, when a man obeys, or does good works, to make an atonement for his former sin. Some, when they have fallen into any sin of omission or commission, for which their consciences check and challenge them, will purpose, vow, and resolve, that they will do better in time coming; and thus they think they will make God amends for what injury they have done to him and his holy law. This argues a legal spirit. There is nothing that can atone for the guilt of sin, but the ransom and propitiation that God hath found.

2*dly*, When a man yields obedience, only to still the clamours of an awakened conscience, or to keep his conscience easy. Alas! sirs, though our own righteousness and good works may appease and stop the mouth of conscience; but they will never "purge the conscience from dead works." Nothing less can satisfy conscience, God's deputy, than what satisfies divine justice; and that is the blood of Christ applied

by faith. And therefore it must needs argue or discover a man to be of a legal spirit, that licks himself whole with his good works. Good works are not to be neglected: but they are not to be rested in, or upon, as a righteousness.

3*dly*, When a man yields obedience to the commands of the law, only that he may be kept out of hell. It is true, indeed, there is a filial fear of God as a Father, and of his fatherly displeasure, which is one of the principal springs of gospel obedience, according to what you have, Jer. xxxii. 40: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." But there is a vast difference between this, and a slavish fear of hell and eternal damnation: there is as great a difference between the one and the other, as between the fear that a loving child has to an affectionate father, and the fear that a condemned criminal or malefactor has of his judge: the one is driven to obedience through terror, but the other is drawn to obedience through love. I do not deny but a child of God, through the prevalence of temptation, desertion, or unbelief, may come to be under such a spirit of bondage; but then it is not his privilege, but his punishment. And in so far as the child of God is actuated in his obedience by a "spirit of bondage unto fear," his obedience is legal: for when he acts like himself, like a believer indeed, he 'serves the Lord without fear," without slavish fear of hell and wrath, "in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of his life," Luke i. 74, 75.

4*thly*, When a man performs good works, to procure a right and title to heaven and glory. For, as I was saying, our title comes only by Jesus Christ; Christ is the first heir of eternal life, and we are "joint-heirs with him." But you may say, Are we not told, Rev. xxii. 14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city?" For clearing this to you, you should know, that there is a twofold right to glory, which is the thing there spoken of, to wit, a legal and evidential right. (1.) I say, there is a legal or a law right. You know the title to life and glory was forfeited by the breach of the law in the first Adam; and it must be recovered again by a perfect obedience to the law: and whose obedience can do this, but the obedience of Christ imputed to us for righteousness? So that, I say, we come to have our law right and title to glory, and other blessings, only recovered in Christ, and by the imputation of his righteousness to us, by which "the law is magnified, and made honourable." But, (2.) There is a right of evidence, by which our right, through Christ, is evidenced, and cleared up to our own souls. And this is the right that I conceive

is spoken of in the scripture last mentioned. "They that do his commandments," and yield obedience out of gospel principles and motives, give evidence of their *right*, through Christ, to heaven and glory; and they shall "enter in through the gates into the city of the new Jerusalem." But to make our own obedience, our own holiness or good works, the ground and foundation of our claim to the glories of heaven, is grossly legal and Popish. Thus, I say, study to beware of doing good works out of legal motives and principles; for these are like the "dead fly," that "makes the apothecary's ointment to stink."

6. My last advice is, Study to yield obedience out of gospel principles, ends, and motives, I shall not enlarge upon these, because they were hinted at already. Obey and do good works, with an eye to the glory of God, out of a principle of gratitude to him that has bought you with his blood. And yield obedience, that in this way you may maintain fellowship and communion with God. It is the man "that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully, who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place." The duties of obedience are like wagons or chariots, which bring the soul to Christ, and the embraces of his love, though they be not the procuring or meritorious cause of the least blink of the Lord's countenance. And then, to conclude, study the duties of obedience, not that you may obtain a title to heaven, which is the fruit of the Redeemer's purchase; but that you may attain an aptitude and "meetness for partaking of the inheritance of the saints in light:" for though there be no connexion of merit, yet there is a connexion of congruity and suitableness between begun holiness here, and consummate holiness, hereafter. It is among the irreversible decrees of Heaven, that unholy, unsanctified sinners, continuing so, "shall never enter into the kingdom of God." "No unclean thing shall ever enter the gates of the new Jerusalem." And therefore beware of thinking, that when we lead you to Christ, as the only foundation of your title to eternal life, we thus encourage any in a way of sin or unholiness. No; the grace of God, in the gospel, teaches us better things, namely, to "deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

SERMON IX.

CHRIST IN THE BELIEVER'S ARMS.*

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.—PSAL. LXXIII. 25.

Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God.—LUKE II. 28.

IN the preceding context, from verse 25th and downward, we have the following particulars recorded concerning Simeon, of whom my text speaks: 1. We have an account of his character, ver. 25. He was *a just and devout man;* that is, one that made conscience of the duties of the first and second table of the law; just towards man, and devout towards God. Note, That there are no barren branches in Christ the true vine: "They that have believed in him, will be careful to maintain good works, and will have a respect to all his commandments." Another part of Simeon's character is, that he "waited for the consolation of Israel;" that is, for Christ the promised Messiah, who is, has been, and will be the matter and ground of consolation to all believers, in all ages and periods of time; and "blessed are all they that wait for him, for they shall not be confounded." Another part of his character is, that "the Holy Ghost was upon him;" and that both as a Spirit of prophecy, and a Spirit of holiness. It is the privilege of all true believers, that they have "the Spirit of glory, and of God resting upon them," 1 Pet. iv. 14. 2. We have here a promise made to Simeon, ver. 26: "And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." In this promise, Simeon saw him by the eye of faith, before he saw him by the eye of his body. Note, That faith's views of Christ in the promise, makes way for the sensible manifestations of him here, and the immediate enjoyment of him hereafter: Eph. i. 13: "After that ye believed, ye were sealed." 3. We have the time when, and the place where Simeon had this promise actually accom-

* Preached at the celebration of the Lord's supper in Strathmiglo, May 10, 1724.

plished to him, ver. 27; it was in the "temple, when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law." Note, They who would have a meeting with Christ, must wait upon him in his temple, and ordinances of his appointment; for it is there that "every one doth speak of his glory." 4. In the words of my text we have Simeon's welcome and the kindly reception he gave to the Messiah, when he met him in the temple: "Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God."

Where notice, 1. Simeon's privilege, "He took him up in his arms," namely, in the arms of his body: but at the same time he embraced him also in the arms of faith, and took him up as the salvation of God; otherwise he could never have blessed God for him, as the promised Messiah, "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel." I am ready to believe, that there were many who got Christ in their arms, when he was an infant, who never had him formed in their hearts: but Simeon got him both in the arms of his body and soul at once. Some may be ready to think, O what a happy man was Simeon, and what a sweet arms-full had he, when he had the great Messiah, Immanuel, God-man, in his bodily arms! It is true, indeed, this was a privilege; but yet his greatest privilege was, that he had him clasped in his arms of faith. And though now his body be out of our reach, yet still there is access to embrace him in a way of believing: and this is what every true believer has the experience of, either in less or more. 2. In the words we have Simeon's gratitude for this privilege: *He blessed God.* He is in a praising frame, being "filled with joy and peace in believing." And his heart is so big with praise, that he wishes immediately to be away to the land of praise, where he might get a well-tuned harp put into his hand, and join with the hallelujahs of the redeemed above: *Now*, says he, *lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.* So much for explication of the words.

Before I proceed to the doctrine I intend to insist upon, we may observe, from the text and context, 1. That God's word of promise to his people is sure, and never fails of accomplishment. Simeon here had got a promise from the Lord, "that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ;" and, accordingly, my text gives an account of its accomplishment. O sirs, venture on God's word of promise, and look on it as the best security; for *faithful is he that hath promised:* his naked word is as good as payment; he never broke his word to man; yea, "it is impossible for him to lie." 2. That believers will find God not only as good, but better than his word, when he comes, in his own time, to make out his promise to them. Simeon had a promise, that he should only

see the Messiah before he died; but we find, that he gets more than a bare sight of him, for he gets him in his arms and heart at once. 3. That a true believer loves Christ so well, that he would put him in his very heart. Simeon here takes Christ in his arms, and lays him in his bosom, as near his heart as he could bring him. So the spouse, Song i. 13: "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts." O! the mutual endearments betwixt Christ and believers; he carries them as lambs in his bosom, and they carry the Lamb of God in their bosoms, Is. xl. 11. 4. That faith's embraces of Christ are so sweet, that they render the prospect of death not only easy, but desirable to the believer. Simeon, here, when he gets Christ in his arms, is content that the union betwixt his soul and body should be dissolved. But passing all these, the doctrine I design to discuss at the time is this:

Doct. "That faith's embraces of Christ fill the mouth with praise." Simeon took him in his arms, and blessed God; where, as I told you, it was the arm of faith clasped about Christ, that filled him with praise and gratitude, taking him up as the Lord's Messiah.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance,

I. Speak a little concerning that arm of faith which embraces Christ.

II. Notice some of these songs of praise, which readily fill the believer's heart and mouth, when he gets Christ in his arms.

III. Whence it is that faith's embraces of Christ thus fill the heart and mouth with praise.

IV. Apply the whole.

I. As to the *first*, namely, *concerning that arm of faith which embraces Christ*, I would show, 1. What it is. 2. What sort of an arm it is. 3. How it embraces Christ.

For the *first*, I have not time at present to open up the nature of faith at any length; all I shall do, is only, in a few particulars, to show what it supposes and implies.

1. Then, It plainly supposes, that there is a gift or grant of Christ made to sinners, in the free offer and call of the gospel. Receiving necessarily supposes a giving; and to take what is not given, is but theft, robbery, or vicious intromission. John vi. 32: Christ there says to a promiscuous multitude, the greater part of whom were unbelievers, as is evident from the sequel of the chapter, "My Father giveth you the true bread

from heaven:" where it is plain, that giving and offering are much the same thing; with this difference only, that the gift or grant of Christ in the word to sinners, is the ground upon which the offer is made. We read, that "God hath given the earth to the sons of men;" that is, he made a grant of it to them, to be used and possessed by them. And, by virtue of this grant, before the earth came to be fully peopled, when a man came to a piece of land, and set his foot upon it, he might warrantably use it as his own property and possession: and the foundation of this was, that God had *given*, or granted, *the earth to the sons of men.* In like manner, God had *gifted* or granted *his only begotten Son*, John iii. 16. For what end? *That whosoever believeth in him*, or takes possession of him by faith, *should not perish, but have everlasting life.* It is true, indeed, the eternal destination, the purchase and application of redemption is peculiar only to the elect: but the revelation, gift and offer, is common to all the hearers of the gospel; insomuch that, as the great Mr. Rutherford expresses it, the reprobate have as fair a revealed warrant to believe as the elect have. Every man has an offer of Christ brought to his door, who lives within the compass of the joyful sound: and this offer comes as close home to him, as if he were pointed out by name. So that none have reason to say, 'The call and offer is not to me, I am not warranted to embrace Christ;' for it is *unto you, O men*, that we *call, and* our *voice is to the sons of man*, Prov. viii. 4. We have God's commission to preach this gospel, and to make offer of this Christ *to every creature* sprung of Adam, Mark xvi. 15; and the event of the publication of this gospel among sinners follows in the next words: "He that believeth *this gospel*, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." No man ever died, or shall die under the drop of the gospel, for want of a full warrant to embrace a Saviour: no, no, sirs, your death and blood will be upon your own heads; your unbelief will be the great ground of your condemnation. God will upbraid you at the great day with this, that you had Christ in your offer, and would not embrace him: "I called, but ye refused, I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded,—therefore will I laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh," Prov. i. 24, 26.

2. This embracing of Christ supposes the knowledge of Christ; for a man, when he believes, does not embrace a blind bargain. Now, there is a twofold knowledge that faith necessarily supposes; namely, a knowledge of ourselves, and a knowledge of Christ.

1*st*, I say it supposes the knowledge of ourselves, or a conviction and discovery of that sin and misery, thraldom and bondage, we are reduced to, by the breach of the first co-

venant. The law must be our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ. Without a discovery of sin and misery by the law, in less or more, the sinner will never flee to him, who is "the end of the law for righteousness." The man, in this case, is just like a mariner at sea, sailing upon a broken and shattered bottom, not far from a great rock: so long as he apprehends his vessel to be good enough, or sufficient to carry him to land, he will still cleave to it, refusing to throw himself upon the rock for safety; but when the wind and waves beat upon the ship, and break her in pieces, then, and never till then, will he cast himself upon the rock. So is it here: while the sinner apprehends he can do well enough upon the broken foundation of a covenant of works, his own doings, and good intentions, he will never betake himself to Christ "the Rock of ages," but when a hail-storm sweeps down the refuge of lies, and lets him see, that if he stay on this bottom of the law, he must inevitably sink into the bottom of hell, then, and never till then, will the man cry with the jailer, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The same we see in Paul, Rom. vii. 9: "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." And, Gal. ii. 19: "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Thus, I say, embracing of Christ necessarily supposes the knowledge and conviction of our lost condition by the law, or covenant of works.

2*dly*, It supposes or implies a knowledge of Christ, as the blessed remedy of God's providing. And there is so much of this goes into the very nature of faith, that we find it frequently called by the name of *knowledge*, Is. liii. 11; John xvii. 3.—And this knowledge of Christ is not a bare speculative knowledge of him, attained by external revelation, or common illumination; for there are many learned unbelievers: but it is an internal saving knowledge of him, which comes by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, accompanying the external discoveries of him in the gospel, which goes in to the nature of true faith: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, *must* shine in our hearts, giving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. He, as it were, strikes out a window in the man's breast, which before was like a dungeon of hellish darkness; and makes a beam of saving, humbling, and captivating light to shine into it. And thus the man is "called out of darkness into a marvellous light." And this light is called *the light of life*, because with it, and by it, a new principle of life is implanted in the soul: Eph. ii. 1: "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

3. This embracing of Christ bears in it the soul's firm and steady assent to the revelation of the gospel concerning Christ;

so that the man cannot but join issue with Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15: "This is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Now, this assent of the soul to the gospel revelation is not a bare historical assent, which leans only to the testimony of man; for thus reprobates may and do believe: but it is such an assent, as is founded upon the testimony of God, or his record concerning Christ in the gospel. Hence it is called a "believing the record of God," a "setting to the seal that God is true." Faith that is of a saving nature, will not venture upon any thing less than the credit and authority of God himself:—*Thus saith the Lord*, is the ground and reason of the soul's assent. And this is a firmer basis than heaven and earth; for "the fashion of this world passeth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever;" "righteousness is the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." So that he will as soon cease to be God, as cease to make good his word, which is ratified by his oath; these being the "two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie."

4. Upon this, follows the receiving, embracing, or applying act of faith. Christ being known in the light of the word and Spirit, and the truth of the revelation concerning him assented to; the soul goes a degree farther, and, as it were, takes him home into its arms and bosom, as a remedy every way suited to the soul's malady and misery. This embracing and appropriating act of faith is just, as it were, the soul's echo to the call and offer of the gospel. I offer him for *thy Saviour*, says God: and I embrace him as *my Saviour*, says faith: I offer him for *wisdom*, to thee who art a fool, says God; and I embrace him for *my wisdom*, says faith: I offer him for *thy righteousness* and *justification*, who art a condemned sinner, says God; and I embrace him as *the Lord my righteousness*, says faith: I offer him for *thy sanctification*, who art a polluted filthy sinner, says God; and I embrace him for *my sanctification*, says faith: I offer him for *thy redemption*, who art a lawful captive, says God; and I embrace him for *my redemption*, and *my all*, says faith. Thus, I say, the soul echoes to the voice of God in the gospel, when it believes, much like that, Zech. xiii. 9: "I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." And this is what we call "the assurance of faith," or an "appropriating persuasion," by which the soul, as it were, takes seisin and infeoffment upon Christ, and all the blessings of his purchase as its own, upon the ground of the gospel offer and promise. What lay before in common to all in the offer, the soul brings home to itself in particular; and, just like Simeon, takes Christ in its arms and bosom, saying, with Thomas, "My Lord, and my

God." I do not say, that the first language of faith is, That 'Christ died for me,' or, 'I was elected from eternity:' no; but the language of faith is, 'God offers a slain and crucified Saviour to me, and I take the slain Christ for my Saviour; and in my taking or embracing of him as offered, I have ground to conclude, that I was elected, and that he died for me in particular, and not before.' I shall only add, that this appropriating act inseparably attends the knowledge and assent before mentioned; and that they are all jointly comprised in the general nature of saving faith; which I take up as an act of the whole soul, without restricting it to any one faculty, or distinction as to priority or posteriority of time.

Now, this saving faith, which I have been describing in its essential acts, is variously expressed in the sacred oracles of the scriptures of truth; from which fountain alone our notions of it are to be drawn: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Is. viii. 20.

1. Then, It is called a *receiving of Christ:* John i. 12: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Col. ii. 6: "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." This expression of faith leads us to conceive of Christ under the notion of a *gift*, freely offered and presented to us in the gospel, and bears an appropriation in the very nature of it; for where a man receives a gift, he takes it as his own, and it becomes his in possession.

2. It is sometimes expressed by a *resting* or "rolling ourselves on the Lord:" Psal. xxxvii. 5: "Commit thy way unto the Lord," or, as it reads in the margin, "Roll thy way upon the Lord;" and ver. 7: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." Which expression may either allude to a poor weary man, who is like to sink under a load, his legs not able to bear him; he leans or rests himself upon a strong rock, which he is confident will not sink underneath. Faith, in its justifying act, is not a working, but a resting grace. 'O! says the poor soul, I am like to sink into the depths of hell, under the weight of my iniquities; which "have gone over my head, as a burden too heavy for me to bear:" but I lay my help where God has laid it; O! "this is my rest."' Hence he that believes is said to "enter into his rest." Or, this resting of the soul on Christ may allude to one's resting upon a bond, or good security granted to him by a responsible person; he takes it as security to himself, and rests on the fidelity of him that grants it. So, in believing, we rest upon the

veracity of a promising God in Christ, as a sufficient security for the blessing promised.

3. It is called a "flying for refuge to the hope set before us," Heb. vi. 18. In which there is an allusion to the man-slayer under the law, who fled from "the avenger of blood." The poor pursued man was not to turn aside to any of the cities of Israel; he was not to flee to his own home; yea, he was not to flee to the temple; and to offer sacrifice; but he was to flee straight to the city of refuge. So, in believing, the soul is never to rest in any thing on this side of Christ, who is "a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest:" the hail shall sweep away every other refuge.—But as the man-slayer, when once within the gates of the city of refuge, was in such safety, that he could freely speak with the avenger of blood, without any manner of danger; so the soul that is by faith got under the covert of the blood and righteousness of Christ, is in such absolute safety, that it dares speak to the law, and all its pursuers, saying with the apostle, Rom. viii. 33, 34, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died," &c.

4. It is called a "submitting to the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. A very strange expression! Shall it be thought submission for a condemned criminal to accept of pardon from his prince? or for a person that is stark naked, to accept of a garment? The expression plainly points out the arrogant pride of the heart of man. We are, as it were, mounted upon an imaginary throne of our own righteousness by the law, thinking, with Laodicea, that we are "rich, and stand in need of nothing," disdaining to be obliged to another for righteousness: but now, when a man believes, all these towering imaginations are levelled; he is emptied of himself, and made to "count all things but loss and dung, that he may be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 8, 9. The language of the soul, submitting to the righteousness of God, is that of the church, Is. xlv. 24: "Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

5. It is called a "taking hold of God's covenant," Is. lvi. 4. The covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, is like a rope cast into a company of drowning men; God comes by his ministers, crying to sinking sinners, who are going down to the bottomless gulf of his wrath, *Take hold of my covenant*, and of him whom I have *given for a covenant of the people;* and I will *deliver* you *from going down to the pit.* Now, when a man believes, he, as it were, takes hold of this rope of salvation, this covenant of grace and pro-

mise; and, like Jeremiah, when the cords were let down to the pit by Ebed-melech, puts them under his arm-holes, and lays his weight upon them. The poor soul, in this case, says with David, speaking of the covenant of grace, *This is all my salvation;* here will I lay the weight of my sinking and perishing soul.

6. It is called a *yielding ourselves unto the Lord*, 2 Chron. xxx. 8. Hezekiah, writing to the degenerate tribes, exhorts them to *yield themselves unto the Lord;* or, as it is in the Hebrew, *Give the hand unto the Lord;* alluding to men who have been at variance, when they come to an agreement, they strike hands one with another, in token of friendship. The great God, the offended Majesty of Heaven, comes, in a gospel dispensation, "stretching out his hand all the day long" to rebellious sinners, crying, *Behold me, behold me:* cast away your rebellious arms, and be at peace with me. Now, when a sinner believes, he, as it were, strikes hands with the Lord, according to that promise, Is. xxvii. 5: "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me."

7. It is called an *opening of the heart to Christ*, Cant. v. 2; Rev. iii. 20; Acts xvi. 14. This expression imports, that as the sinner's heart is by nature shut and bolted against the Lord; so, when he believes, the *everlasting doors* of the understanding, will, and affections, are "lifted up to the Lord of hosts, the Lord mighty in battle," Psal. xxiv. 7.

8. It is sometimes called a *buying*, Is. lv. 1: "Buy wine and milk without money, and without price." Rev. iii. 18: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire," &c.— This buying does not import such a commutation, as if we were to give to God an equivalent for his grace; for it is a buying "without money, and without price;" it is a giving of poverty for riches, emptiness for fulness, deformity for beauty, guilt for righteousness, pollution for holiness, bondage for liberty; in a word, buying in Christ's market is nothing else but taking: Rev. xxii. 17: "Whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely."

Many other expressions the Spirit of God makes use of in the word, to [represent] the nature of faith. Sometimes it is called, *the substance of things hoped for*, Heb. xi. 1; because faith, as it were, realizes and substantiates the promise. Just like a man, looking to bonds, charters, or any other securities; he will say, 'There is my substance, and all my stock,' though they be but bits of paper. So the believer, when looking on Christ, his righteousness and fulness, as held forth in the free promise of the gospel, will be ready to say, 'There is my substance and everlasting all:' with David, he *rejoiceth in God's word* of pro-

mise, *as one that findeth great spoil;* yea, it is *better* to him *than gold, yea, than much fine gold.* Again; it is called, in the same verse, *the evidence of things not seen.* The word, in the original rendered *evidence*, signifies to convince to a demonstration. Faith, acting upon the promise, convinces the soul of the reality of things invisible, as if they were before him, and he saw them with his bodily eyes. And this sight of faith is not such a sight as Balaam got of Christ, when he said, "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh." He saw him by the spirit of prophecy, as the Redeemer of Israel; but not by the spirit of faith, as *his Redeemer*, as Job, chap. xix. 25. Balaam saw him, without any personal interest; but Job saw him as his own Redeemer, with appropriation: "I know," says he, "that my Redeemer liveth." Again; in the 13th verse of the same chapter, faith is called an *embracing of the promises*, Heb. xi. 13. The word in the original signifies a kindly salutation, or kissing; being an allusion to two dear friends, who, when they meet, clasp one another in their arms, in a most loving and affectionate manner. The grace of the promise embraces the soul, and then the soul embraces the promise, and hugs it, and Christ in it, in his arms. The reverse of this is the case of the presumptuous hypocrite, who in some sort embraces the promise indeed; but the special grace of the promise not having embraced him, he is like a man taking a tree in his arms; he embraces the tree, but not the tree him.

Again, faith is sometimes called an "eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the Son of man," John vi. 53; because faith makes use of, and applies Christ for the life, nourishment, and sustenance of the soul; just as a man makes use of the meat and drink that is set before him, for his bodily nourishment. Let a man have ever such a rich feast before him, yet he will inevitably starve, unless he resort to it, and make use of it; so, without faith's application of Christ and his fulness, we inevitably die and perish. And O how sad to perish in the midst of plenty!

Lastly, Faith is called a "trusting in the name of the Lord," Is. l. 10, and xxvi. 3. We all know what it is to trust in a man of honesty and integrity. When he passes his word, we make no doubt, and have no hesitation concerning his performing what he has promised; so faith takes the promise, and trusts the veracity of the Promiser; as it is said of Abraham, Rom. iv. 20, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." The perfections of God, such as his power, holiness, goodness, but especially his veracity, are pawned in the promise, as grounds of trust. Hence we are to trust in his NAME: and when we

trust in him, and stay ourselves upon him, we are still to take him up as our God in Christ; for we can never trust him, while we take him up as an enemy.

The *second* thing proposed, for opening up the first general head in the method, was to give you some of the qualities of this arm of faith.

1. It is a leaning and a staying arm: Cant. viii. 5: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Is. xxvi. 3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." It is the office of faith to underprop the soul, when it is ready to be overwhelmed with the burden of sin and sorrow, darkness and desertion: Psal. xxvii. 13: "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." It leans and stays itself on him who is "the Strength of Israel, *even* the man of God's right hand, whom he hath made strong for himself." And thus it bears up the soul under the heaviest pressures.

2. It is a winning and gaining arm. The apostle, Phil. iii. 8, 9, speaks of *winning Christ* and *being found in him.* And it is said of the wise merchant, that *he went and sold all that he had*, that he might *buy* or win *the pearl of great price;* and this pearl can be won no otherwise but by receiving it, John i. 12. Faith is such a winning grace, that it is ever taking, ever receiving out of Christ's fulness, *grace for grace;* it digs into the Rock of ages, and makes up the poor soul with unsearchable riches; it maintains a traffic with heaven, travels to the land afar off, and returns richly freighted and loaded with the commodities of that better country.

3. It is a very wide and capacious arm. It is not little that will fill the arm of faith: the whole world, and all the fulness thereof, cannot fill the arm of faith: no, no; it flings them away like dung, that it may get its arms filled with a God in Christ: "I count all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," Phil. iii. 8. I may add, that heaven, and all the glories of Immanuel's land, bear no bulk in the arm of faith without Christ, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells: Psal. lxxiii. 25: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

4. It is a most tenacious arm; its motto may be, GRIPE-FAST. As the arm of faith is wide, and takes in much; so it keeps, and gripes fast what it gets: Cant. iii. 4: "I held him," says the spouse, "and would not let him go." Faith is such a tenacious grace, that it will wrestle with an omnipotent God, and refuse to yield to him when he seems to shake himself loose of its gripes, as we see in the case of Ja-

cob, Gen. xxxii. 24, and downward. There Jacob gets a gripe by faith of the Angel of the covenant: the Angel says to him, "Let me go," Jacob. A very strange word, for the Creator to become a supplicant to his own creature! Well, what says Jacob's faith to this proposal? "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." As if he had said, 'Let the day break, and let it pass on, let the night come, and let the day break again; it is all one; lean Jacob and the living God shall not part without the blessing.' To this purpose is that of the prophet, Hos. xii. 3, 4: "By his strength," namely, by the strength of faith in prayer, "he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto him." O sirs! try to follow the example of Jacob, and you shall be "fed with the heritage of Jacob" your "father," Is. lviii. 14. Thus, I say, faith is a most griping and tenacious arm. The first gripe that faith takes of Christ is so fast, that it never quits gripe of him again through eternity: it unites the soul to Christ; and the union is so close and intimate through faith, that the man becomes *one body* and *one spirit* with him, and so indissoluble, as that "neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, shall *ever* be able to separate from the love of God in Christ Jesus."

5. Hence it follows, that faith is a very bold and confident arm. It has a great deal of *assurance* in it; for it will maintain its claim to Christ, upon the ground of the new covenant, even when hell and earth, sense and reason, and all seems to be against it; it will trust in the name of the Lord, and stay itself upon its God in covenant, even when the poor soul walks in the darkness of desertion, in the darkness of temptation, in the darkness of affliction, or even in the dark valley of the shadow of death. Abraham's faith had much opposition to grapple with, when he got the promise of Isaac, and in him of the promised seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; yet such was the confidence and assurance of his faith, that *he staggered not at the promise.* The language of faith is, "When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness," Mic. vii. 8, 9. Yet I would not be here mistaken, as if the poor believer did not apprehend Christ and the promise with a tottering and trembling hand; nay, the believer, through the prevalence of unbelief, is many times brought so low, as to cry with the psalmist, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender

mercies? Selah." Psal. lxxvii. 7—9. But let it be remembered, that this was not his faith, but his *infirmity*, through prevailing unbelief, which made him thus to stagger: for, let faith but get rid of unbelief, let it get up its head, and allow it to speak its proper language, its dialect will be, *Abba, Father*, Rom. viii. 15; and, "Doubtless, thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, thy name is from everlasting."

6. It is a very patient and waiting arm; for "he that believeth shall not make haste," Is. xxviii. 16. Faith, although it firmly believes the accomplishment of the promise, yet it will not limit the Holy One of Israel as to the time of its accomplishment: "I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him," Is. viii. 17. "The vision is for an appointed time; (and therefore, says faith,) though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry," Hab. ii. 3. Faith will not draw rash or desperate conclusions, because the Lord hides or defers his visits: no; but it looks to God's word of promise, and grounds its confidence there, saying with the church, "I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me," Mic. vii. 7.

7. Faith is a feeding arm; it feeds upon the carcass of "the Lion of the tribe of Judah;" and thus, like Samson, gets its "meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong." Hence, as you heard, it is called an *eating of the flesh* and a *drinking of the blood of Christ:* and in this view Christ is presented to us in the sacrament of the supper, *Take, eat; this is my body.* There was a part of the sacrifices under the law reserved for food to the priests, when the rest was burnt upon the altar: believers are spiritual priests to God, and they live upon the altar, and that blessed "passover that was sacrificed for us."

8. It is not an idle, but a working arm. Indeed, in its justifying act it is not a working, but only a taking, or a resting arm: it is like the beggar's hand, that takes the alms, without working for it. In justification, faith is a passive or recipient kind of an instrument; but, in sanctification, it is an active or an efficient kind of instrument. It is such an active arm in sanctification, that it "purifies the heart," and actuates and animates all the other graces of the Spirit; it "works by love," it works by repentance, it works by hope, it works by patience, it works by obedience; and "faith without works is dead, as the body without the spirit is dead." In a word, the whole of gospel obedience, is "the obedience of faith;" and the obedience that flows not from faith is but "dead works," which cannot be acceptable to a "living God."

9. Faith is a fighting and warlike arm: In Heb. xi. 34, it is said of the worthies there, that they by faith, "waxed valiant in fight:" yea, it is not only a fighting, but a victorious arm; for it "puts to flight the armies of the aliens." It is by faith leaning on the arm of Omnipotence, that the believer's bow abides in its strength, and the arms of his hands become strong, to break bows of steel in pieces. By faith we quench the fiery darts of hell, and trample upon the powers of darkness; by faith we overcome the world, and set the moon under our feet. Yes, this gallant grace of faith will take up the spoils of Christ's victory over sin and Satan, hell and death, and triumph in his triumphs, even while it is in the field of battle, and seemingly overcome by the enemy. "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." My Head and General, says faith, has overcome, and I have already overcome in him; for "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us," Rom. viii. 37.

10. *Lastly*, Faith is a saving arm: "He that believeth shall be saved." There is an inseparable connexion established, by the ordination of Heaven, between faith and salvation, John. iii. 16: "Whosoever believeth, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Although, indeed, there is no connexion of causality, yet there is an undoubted connexion of order. Faith cannot but carry salvation along with it, seeing it takes up Christ the salvation of God in its arms, as you see Simeon did.

The *third* thing proposed here was, to inquire how this arm of faith embraces Christ? In general, I answer, it embraces him just as God offers him in the gospel. There is a manifest proportion betwixt God's offer, and faith's reception of Christ; which I shall illustrate in the four following particulars:—

1. Christ is *freely* offered in the gospel, Is. lv. 1; Rev. xxii. 17; so faith embraces him as the free gift of God. There is a natural propensity in the heart of man, to give something or other of our own, by way of exchange or equivalent, for Christ, and the blessings of his purchase. Proud nature cannot think of being so much beholden to God, as to take Christ and salvation from him for nothing at all; and therefore it would always be bringing in this or the other qualification, as a price in its hand to fit it for Christ; I must be so penitent, so humble, so clean and holy before I come to Christ, and then I will be welcome, he will pardon and save me. But, sirs, whatever you may think of it, this is but a remnant of the old covenant of works, and all one as if a man should say, I must first heal myself before I go to the physician; I will first wash myself clean, before I go to the "fountain

opened up for sin and for uncleanness." Beware of this, for it is a secret subverting of the order and method which God has established in the covenant of grace; this being the very money and price which he forbids us to bring to the market of free grace. Faith argues at another rate in its embracing of Christ: 'O!' says the poor soul, 'I am a diseased sinner from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head; and this qualifies me for the Physician of souls: I am a polluted sinner, black, like the Ethiopian, spotted like the leopard; and therefore I will go to the fountain: I am naked; and therefore I will take the white raiment offered me, to cover the shame of my nakedness: I am blind; and therefore I will take the eye-salve, which recovers sight to the blind.' Thus, I say, faith embraces Christ as he is freely offered.

2. Christ is *fully* and *wholly* offered in the gospel; and accordingly faith embraces him wholly without dividing him. I own, indeed, that the first flight of faith is to Christ as a Saviour, Christ as priest, fulfilling the law, satisfying justice, and thereby bringing in everlasting righteousness; this being the only thing that can answer the present strait and necessity of the soul, under the awful apprehensions of vindictive justice and wrath; and therefore thither it flees for refuge, in the first act of believing. But now, although faith at first fixes upon Christ as a priest; yet at the same time it embraces him as a prophet, submitting to his instruction, and subjects itself to him as a king, receiving the law from his mouth: 'O!' says the soul, '"I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man;" but this Saviour "has pity on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way:" he opens the book, and looses the seven seals thereof;" and therefore I will sit down at his feet, and receive the whole revelation of the mind and will of God from him: I am a poor captive and vassel of hell; "Other lords have had dominion over me, but," now "I will make mention of his name:" he is "my Judge, my Lawgiver, and my King," even he that "saves me."' Thus, I say, the arm of faith embraces a whole Christ. 'There is nothing of Christ,' says the soul, 'that I can want; I must have him all, and have him all as mine own, as my Prophet, my Priest, and my King. And herein the faith of the hypocrite, or temporary believer, comes short of the faith of God's elect. The hypocrite, halves Christ, or else inverts the order of his office, in his way of receiving him: either he receives him as a Saviour, only to keep him out of hell, but waves the acceptance of him as a King to rule him; or else he professedly subjects himself to Christ's authority as a King and a Lawgiver, hoping, upon that score, that Christ will save him, by his blood and righteous-

ness, as a priest; and [thus endeavours to] make up the defects of his lame obedience; which is, upon the matter, to "put a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, *whereby* the rent is made worse."

3. God gives Christ *cordially* and *affectionately* in the gospel: his very heart, as it were, goes out after sinners, in the call and offer of it. It is not possible to conceive any thing more affectionate, than the word in which he bespeaks sinners: Ezek. xxxiii. 11: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel!" Hos. xi. 8: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together." Is. lv. 1—3: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Now, I say, as God offers Christ most affectionately and cordially, in like manner does faith embrace him. He embraces a whole Christ, with the whole heart and soul; the love, joy, delight, and complacency of the soul, run out upon him as their very centre of rest: and these affections, like so many springs of gospel obedience, set all the members of the body at work in his service; so that the head will study for him, the hand work for him, the feet run his errands, and the tongue be ready to plead his cause.

4. Christ is offered *particularly*, to *every* man. There is not a soul hearing me, but, in God's name, I offer Christ to him, as if called by name and surname. Now, as the offer is particular to every individual person, so faith embraces Christ with particular application to the soul itself. When I embrace a Saviour, I do not embrace for salvation to another man; no, but I embrace him as my Saviour, for salvation to my own soul in particular. Beware, my friends, of a general doubtsome faith, abjured in our national covenant as a branch of Popery. A general persuasion of the mercy of God in Christ, and of Christ's ability and willingness to save all that come to him, will not do the business; no, devils and reprobates may, and do actually believe it. There must therefore of necessity be a persuasion and belief of this, with particular

application thereof to a man's own soul; for if the mercy of God in Christ be offered to every man in particular, then surely faith, which, as I was saying, is but the echo of the soul to the gospel call, must embrace Christ, and the mercy of God in him, with particular application to itself, otherwise it does not answer God's offer; consequently, cannot be of a saving nature. So much for the *first* general head proposed in the prosecution of the doctrine.

II. The *second* thing proposed was, to *take notice of some of these songs, which readily the soul has in its mouth, when, like Simeon, it gets Christ embraced in the arms of faith.* We are said to be "filled with all joy and peace in believing;" by faith in an unseen Christ, the soul is replenished *with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* And when this is the soul's case, it cannot but bless God, as Simeon did, and vent its heart in these or the like songs of praise.

1. It cannot but bless him for electing and everlasting love. Faith's embraces of Christ help the soul to trace the streams of divine love to their fountain head, and to read its own name in the book of life, among the living in Jerusalem. 'O blessed be God,' will the soul say, 'that ever I, wretched I, miserable I, should have been upon God's heart, before the foundations of the world were laid: "Glory to God in the highest," who hath "drawn me with loving-kindness," by which I know that he "hath loved me with an everlasting love."'

2. The soul, in such a case, cannot but bless God for Christ, and redeeming love through him, saying with the apostle, "Thanks be unto him for his unspeakable gift." Glory to him in the highest, that "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace." And then when the soul views the glorious retinue of blessings that come along with Christ, it cannot shun to join issue with the apostle in his triumphant doxology, Eph. i. 2, saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." And there are these few, among innumerable blessings, that come along with Christ, for which the soul will readily bless God, in the case mentioned.

1*st*, 'O blessed be God,' will the soul say, 'that in Christ he is become *my God*, even *my own God.* I was once *without God in the world;* but O what a happy turn is this! Now I can view him in Christ, and say, "He is my God, my Father, and the Rock of my salvation; the portion of my cup: *and therefore* the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."'

2*dly*, 'O blessed be God,' will the soul say, 'that in Christ the

fiery tribunal is turned into a mercy-seat by his obedience and death. The law and justice having got a complete satisfaction, a way is made for the empire of sovereign grace: so that now "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ, our Lord," Rom. v. 21. And as it is the will of God that grace should reign, so it is the desire of my soul, to make this name of his to be remembered to all generations. O let grace wear the crown, and sway the sceptre for ever; and let all the hallelujahs of the higher house be "to the praise of the glory of his grace."'

3*dly*, 'O blessed be God,' will the soul say, 'that in Christ he has "blotted out all mine iniquities, as a cloud, and as a thick cloud." There was a cloud of sin pregnant with wrath hovering above my head; but in Christ I see it scattered: "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." And therefore, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities."'

4*thly*, 'O blessed be God,' will the soul say, 'that in Christ I am blessed with an *everlasting* and law-abiding *righteousness*. Christ, my ever-blessed Surety, was *made under the law*, and has *magnified it, and made it honourable;* and *the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake;* and in him, and through him, *the righteousness of the law* is *fulfilled in me:* and, therefore, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels,"' Is. lxi. 10.

5*thly*, 'O blessed be God,' will the soul say, 'that in Christ he is become *a Father of the fatherless*, and blessed me with the blessing of adoption and sonship. I may seal it, from my experience, that "in him the fatherless findeth mercy." I was like an outcast infant and helpless orphan, but the everlasting Father took me up, and "gave a place and a name in his house, and within his walls, better than of sons and of daughters, even an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon me, that I should be called a son of God,"' 1 John iii. 1.

6*thly*, 'O glory to God,' will the soul say, 'for the open door of "access into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." The door was once barred against me and all Adam's posterity, by the breach of the first covenant; but in Christ it is again opened, so that we may "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." An incarnate Deity is now become the way to God and glory.'

I might tell you of many other blessings that the soul is

ready to bless God for, when it gets Christ in the arms of faith; but I do not insist. I conclude this head by referring you to two or three scriptural songs which will readily occur in such a case. The first you have, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," &c. Another you have, Rom. viii. 33, to the end of the chapter: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?" &c. A third you have, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" &c. Another, with which I conclude this head, is that which concludes the Bible, Rev. xxii. 20: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

III. The *third* thing proposed was, to *inquire whence it is that faith's embraces of Christ thus fill the mouth with praise?*

Answ. 1. This flows from the certainty that is in faith. Faith is not a doubting grace; no, doubts and jealousies vanish before it, as the clouds and darkness of the night vanish at the appearance of the sun. And the certainty of faith flows from the stability of these foundations upon which it builds, which are more firm than the pillars of heaven, and the foundations of the earth. It builds upon the word of God, the oath of God, the blood of God, the righteousness of God, the power of God, the veracity of God: and seeing it builds upon such immoveable foundations, how can it miss to have a certainty in it proportioned, in some measure, to the grounds upon which it stands? And hence it comes, that it fills the mouth with praise. Let news be ever so good, yet if we have no certainty in our belief of them, it exceedingly mars our joy and comfort. But as regards the glad tidings of the gospel, they are no flying uncertain reports; no, it is God, that cannot lie, who speaks: and thence comes the certainty of faith.

2. This flows from the applying and appropriating nature of faith; which I hinted at already. Let news be ever so true, though ever so great and good, yet if we have no interest or concern in them, it mars the sweetness and comfort of them. Tell a poor man of mountains of gold and silver, what relief will that afford him, if he has no access to it, or interest in it? But tell him, that all these treasures are his, and that he has the owner's warrant and command to take and use them as his own, this will make him rejoice indeed. Tell a hungry and starving man of a rich feast or banquet; what is that to him, if he be not allowed to taste it? Tell a

naked man, exposed to the injuries of the wind and weather, of fine robes and excellent garments; what will it avail him, if they be not for him, or for his use? But tell the hungry man that the feast is for him; and the naked man that the clothing is for him, this will create joy and triumph. So, here, the gospel report does not tell us of a Saviour and salvation that we have no interest in; no, it tells us, that *to us is the word of this salvation sent;* that *unto us is* this *child born, unto us is* this *son given:* that he is "made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" and that, as the great Trustee of Heaven, he "received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also." Now, faith, accordingly, applies all these good news, this Saviour, and his whole salvation, to itself in particular. And hence it comes, that it fills the heart with joy, and the tongue with praise.

3. This flows from that sensible assurance of God's love, and of grace and salvation, which commonly follows upon believing; according to what you have, Eph. i. 13: "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." There is a certainty of sense, which very frequently accompanies or follows upon the certainty of faith, as a natural fruit of it; and yet is not of the nature and essence of it, because there may be true faith where there is not this sensible or reflex assurance of grace and salvation. The certainty of faith is built upon the word of God, the record of God, and the promise of God, which is a believing, because God hath spoken: Psal. lx. 6, 7, compared. God had made a promise of the kingdom to David, "God hath spoken in his holiness," says he, "I will rejoice;" and, in the faith of this word of promise, he speaks with such certainty, as if he were already in possession, "Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine," &c. But now the certainty of sense is a knowing that we have believed, or the soul's reflecting upon its own act of believing. The certainty of faith is like the certainty that a man has of his money in a good and sufficient bond, or the certainty that a man has of his estate, by a good and sufficient charter; he rests upon his bonds and charters as good securities to him. But the certainty of sense is like the certainty that a man has of his money, when he is handling it with his fingers, or taking in his rents. By the certainty of faith, Abraham believed, without staggering, because he had God's word of promise for it; but by the certainty of sense, he knew it, when he saw Sarah delivered of his son Isaac, and got him in his arms. Now, I say, faith commonly produces this sensible assurance, sweet and reviving experiences of the Lord's love to our souls: and hence it comes, that it fills the mouth with praise.

IV. The *fourth* thing was, the *application* of the doctrine. And the *first* use shall be of *information*. This doctrine informs us,

1. Of the excellency of the grace of faith. It cannot but be an excellent grace, because it embraces precious Christ. Hence it is, that God puts such an estimate upon it, that he cares for nothing we do, if that be wanting: "Without faith it is impossible to please God: Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." Suppose it were possible for a man to attain such a pitch of morality, as to be, touching the law, blameless; yet all his obedience, moral and religious, stands for a cipher in God's reckoning; yea, is like the *cutting off a dog's neck*, and the *offering of swine's blood* upon God's altar, if faith be wanting. Thus, then, I say, faith is an excellent grace, of absolute necessity in order to our acceptance before God. Only let it be here carefully remembered, that it is not the act of faith, but its glorious and ever-blessed object, Jesus Christ, whom it embraces, that renders us acceptable to God. In point of acceptance, faith renounces its own actings, and looks for acceptance only "in the Beloved:" *it* "rejoiceth in Christ Jesus" only, and has "no confidence in the flesh."

2. See from this doctrine what a happy and privileged person the believer is. He gets Christ the Lamb of God in the embraces of his soul! and O what can the most enlarged heart or soul of man wish for more! This was the *one thing* that David *desired*, Psal. xxvii. 4. We read of one in the gospel that said to Christ, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked;" to which Christ answered, "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it," Luke xi. 27, 28. And who are they that hear the word of God and keep it, but believers, who have him "formed in their hearts," and clasped in the arms of faith? for *he that* thus *hath the Son, hath life*. And, concerning such, I may say, as Moses said concerning Israel, Deut. xxxiii. 29: "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord!" Notice the expression, they are a people already saved, they *have everlasting life*. That day that Christ comes into the heart, the salvation of God comes, as it is said to Zaccheus, "This day is salvation come to thy house."

3. See, from this doctrine, the true way of joy and comfort. Perhaps there may be some poor soul going mourning without the sun, saying, "Oh that I were as in months past." Once in a day I thought I could say, "The candle of the Lord shined upon my head;" but, alas! the scene is now altered; "the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me:" how shall I recover my wonted joy in the Lord? Well,

here is the way to it; go forth out of yourselves, by a direct act of faith; take Christ anew, in the embraces of your souls, upon the free call and offer of the gospel; and, with Simeon, you shall be made to *bless God.* It is the wreck of the comfort of the generality of God's people, in our day, that they continue poring within themselves, upon their frames, their graces, their experiences, their attainments, without going forth, by faith, to the fulness of a Redeemer for relief. And while we do so, we are just like mariners at sea: while they sail among shallow waters, near the shore, they are always afraid of striking upon rocks, or running upon sands, because they want deepness of water; but when they launch forth into the main ocean, they are delivered of these fears, being carried far above rocks and sands: so while the believer continues among the shallow waters of his graces, duties, experiences, and attainments, he cannot miss to be harassed with continual fears, because the waters of divine grace are but ebb, while we stay there; but when by faith we launch out into that full ocean of grace that is in Christ, then fears, doubts, and perplexities vanish; the soul is carried up above all these, being *strong*, not in the created grace that is in itself, but "in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead." So then, I say, if you would surmount your fears, and recover your joy and comfort in the Lord, study to "live by faith upon the Son of God;" for we are "filled with joy and peace in believing."

4. From this doctrine we may gather what a lightsome place heaven will be, where the soul shall live in Christ's embraces for ever. If the believer's heart be so refreshed when he gets Christ embraced by faith, what overpowering floods of joy must flow upon his soul, when he comes to immediate fruition, where no clouds shall ever intercept the rays of the Sun of righteousness from him, through an endless eternity! No wonder, though sometimes the believer break forth into such longing expressions, when he thinks of immediate enjoyment, as that of Paul: "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."

Use *2d*, may be of *trial.* Sirs, you have been in the temple this day; I would ask, Have you seen the Lord's Messiah there? Have you got him, like Simeon, in the arms and embraces of faith? O! say you, how shall I know if I ever had him in my arms! For answer, take these following things as marks:—

1. If ever you have embraced Christ, Christ has embraced you first; for there is a mutual embracing betwixt Christ and the believer, and it begins on Christ's side; he first gripes the soul by his Spirit, before the soul gripes him by faith: Phil.

iii. 12: "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." 'O!' will the soul say, 'I was wandering, like a lost sheep, among the mountains of vanity; I had gone into a far country, with the prodigal, and never had a thought of Christ, till he, by his sovereign grace, seized and drew me with the cords of victorious love and grace, and then my heart grasped and apprehended him.' Never a soul yet came really to believe in Christ, but will be ready to own, that it was not free will, but free grace that began the work: "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him."

2. If ever you had Christ really in the embraces of faith, you have been made to quit the embraces of other lovers: "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" Particularly, have you been made to part with the law as a husband? Rom. vii. 4: "Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to *a better husband*, even to him who is raised from the dead." O sirs! it is a harder business than many are aware of, to make a divorce between a sinner and the law, so as to make him renounce all hopes of salvation and righteousness from that quarter. It is much easier to pull his lusts out of his arms, than to pull the law, as a husband, out of his embraces. And the reason of this is plain, because the law gives a promise of life to them that obey it, "He that doth these things, shall live in them;" which sin and lust cannot do, in regard they carry the stamp of hell and wrath visibly upon them, to the eye of a natural conscience. So that it is much easier to convince a man that his sin is an evil thing, than to convince him that his righteousness is so: hence Christ tells the Pharisees, those self-righteous wretches, "that publicans and harlots *should* enter into the kingdom of God before them." Publicans and harlots, and such sort of persons, lie more open to the sharp arrows of conviction, than self-righteous persons, who make, as it were, a barricado of the law itself, and their obedience to it, behind which they lie, intrenched and fortified, against all the curses and threatenings of the law that are denounced against them; they still take the law for a friend, while they obey it as well as they can, never dreaming that nothing will satisfy the law, but an obedience that is every way complete. But now, I say, if ever you have embraced Christ, you have been made to part with the law as a covenant, and with your own righteousness by the law, as "filthy rags," saying with Paul, "I through the law am dead to the law." At the same time that the soul quits the embraces of the law as a husband, it parts with "other lovers" also. The first view of Christ by faith, makes all the twinkling stars of created enjoyments

to vanish and disappear; so that the soul joins issue with David, Psal. lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

3. If ever Christ was in the embraces of thy soul, thou mayest know it by the desirable concomitants and effects thereof. I shall not stand upon them; only, in so many words. Your estimate of Christ will be raised; for "unto you which believe he is precious." Your love to him will be inflamed; for "faith worketh by love." Your joy and peace will be increased; for "believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Heart-holiness will be promoted; for "faith purifieth the heart." And, in a word, your souls will make their boast in him; for "in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

Use 3*d*, shall be of *exhortation* to all in general. Sirs, before we part this evening, I would fain have every soul hearing me, going home with the great Messiah, the Son of God, in the arms and embraces of their souls; and then I am sure you would go away, blessing God that ever you come here. We must deal with you as reasonable creatures, and persuade you in a moral way: and when we are so doing, look up to God for the concurring efficacy of his Holy Spirit, whose prerogative it is to persuade and enable you to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is offered to you in the gospel. And therefore, by way of motive, consider,

1. The absolute need you have of this Christ, whom we offer to you. Without him you are "condemned already;" without him you are "without God in the world; God is angry with *you* every day; the law and justice of God, like the avenger of blood, is pursuing you. And therefore, O sinners, flee to a Saviour, "Turn ye to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope."

2. Consider the matchless excellency of that Saviour whom we call you to embrace. Angels and men are at an everlasting stand to speak of his worth and glory; he is best known by his own and his Father's testimony concerning him; and if you would know the record of God concerning him, search the scriptures, for these are they that testify of him: it is in this glass that "we behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." I despair, that ever a sinner will embrace Christ, till there be an uptaking of his personal excellency, as Immanuel God-man. There is a seeing of the Son, which, in order of nature, although not in order of time, goes before the soul's believing in him, John vi. 40.

3. Consider the ability and sufficiency of this Saviour whom we call you to embrace. Take the Father's testimony of his

ability, Psal. lxxxix. 20: "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." Take his own testimony, Is. lxiii. 1: "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Take the Spirit's testimony, in the mouth of the apostle Paul, Heb. vii. 25; declaring him "able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him." Thus, you have the "three that bear record in heaven," attesting the sufficiency of this Saviour. O, then, "set to *your* seal, that God is true, *by* believing the record that God gives of his Son;" for if you do not, your unbelief gives the lie to a whole Trinity, 1 John v. 10, 11.

4. Consider that this sufficient Saviour is *the sent of God.* This is a designation given to Christ thirty or forty times in the gospel according to John, and the ordinary argument with which Christ persuades sinners to embrace and receive him. And nothing could have greater influence than this designation, if the weight of it were but duly weighed. O consider in what quality and capacity his Father has sent him: shall not God's Ambassador-extraordinary get a hearing among a company of condemned rebels? He is sent as a Redeemer to liberate captives; and shall not captives embrace him? He is sent as a Surety; and will not debtors and bankrupts embrace a cautioner? He is sent as a Physician; and will not the wounded and diseased sinner embrace him, and his healing balm? &c.

5. Consider, that his heart and his arms are open and ready to embrace all that are willing to be embraced by him. O, may the soul say, fain would I embrace him, but I doubt of his willingness to embrace me. I tell you good news; he is more willing to embrace you by far, than you are to be embraced by him. He says he is willing and you may believe his word, for he is, "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness;" and he says, that he will cast out none that come to him: he swears he is willing, and will you not believe his oath? Ezek. xxxiii. 11: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live." Pray tell me, why did he engage from eternity, and voluntarily give his hand to the Father in the council of peace, saying, "Lo, I come:—I delight to do thy will, O my God?" Why did he assume the nature of man, and the sinless infirmities of it? Why did he who is the great Lawgiver, subject himself to his own Law? Why did he who is the Lord of life and glory, submit to the stroke of death ignominiously upon a cross? Why does he send out his ministers to you, with call upon call? Why does he wait all the day long, saying, "Behold me, behold me?" Why does he expostulate the matter with you? Why is he grieved at the obstinacy of your hearts, if he be

not willing that you should embrace him? For the Lord's sake, therefore, consider these things, and do not "reject the counsel of God against yourselves."

6. Consider what a glorious train and retinue of blessings come along with him, when he is embraced in the arms of faith: such as pardon of sin; Heb. viii. 12; peace with God, Rom. v. 1; a complete justifying righteousness, Rom. viii. 3, 4; adoption and sonship, John i. 12; sanctification, both in the root and fruit of it, 1 Cor. i. 30; saving knowledge of God, and the mysteries of his covenant, 2 Cor. iv. 6; the crown of eternal glory at last, John iii. 16. All these might be particularly enlarged on; but I do not insist, but proceed to obviate some objections that some may make against complying with this exhortation.

Object. 1. Some poor soul may be ready to say, 'Gladly would I embrace Christ, with my very soul; but still I entertain a jealousy of my right and warrant to meddle with the unspeakable gift of God; he is such a great good, that I am afraid it would be but presumption in me to attempt the embracing of him.' Now, for removing any jealousies of this nature, I shall lay before you a few of these warrants, upon which a lost sinner may receive and embrace this Saviour.

1. Let desperate and absolute necessity be your warrant. You must either do or die; there is no medium: "He that believeth, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Do not stand to dispute the matter; there is no time, no, not one moment of time, in which a man is allowed to toss this question in his breast, after the revelation of Christ to him in the gospel; Shall I believe, or shall I not? Or, if you will dispute the matter, will you argue as the Samaritan lepers did: "If we sit still here, we perish; but if we go into the camp of the Assyrians, peradventure we shall live." So you, 'If we sit still in this sinful and miserable condition, without God, and without Christ in the world, we unavoidably perish; but if we throw ourselves into the arms of a Redeemer, and upon the mercy of God in him, beyond peradventure we shall be saved.' And therefore, I say, let absolute necessity be your warrant.

2. Venture to embrace this Saviour in the arms of faith, upon the warrant of the very design of his incarnation. Why is there a Saviour provided? Why was he manifested in the flesh? Upon what errand was he sent into the world, but "to seek and save that which was lost?" Well, since this is the very design of God in giving a Saviour, that sinners might be saved by him; what can be more agreeable to him, or his Father that sent him, than that a lost sinner should embrace and receive him?

3. Let the revelation of this incarnate Deity, in the glorious gospel, be your warrant to embrace and receive him: a bare revelation of a Saviour, without any more, is enough to induce a sinner to believe in him. Why was the brazen serpent in the wilderness lifted up on the pole, but that every one in the camp of Israel, who were stung with the fiery serpents, might look to it, and be healed? The very lifting up of the brazen serpent was a sufficient warrant to any man to look to it: so the Son of man, being lifted up on the pole of the everlasting gospel, warrants every man to believe in him, John iii. 14, 15.

4. Besides the revelation of Christ, you have a full, free, and unhampered offer of him in the external call of the gospel; and this directed to every one, without exception, Is. lv. 1—3; Rev. xxii. 17; Mark xvi. 15; Prov. viii. 4. Sirs, we offer a Christ to you, and the whole fulness of grace and glory, merit and Spirit, that is in him, as the free gift of God, without the money and price of your own works and qualifications; if you bring any such price, to make a purchase of the pearl of great price, you shall lose him for ever: God loves to give his Christ freely, but he scorns to receive any thing for him. Let this then be your warrant, that Christ is gifted and offered of God in this gospel: and let it be remembered, that in the matter of a gift, there is no difference between man and man; the poorest, as well as the richest, may receive a gift presented to him: a condemned malefactor has as good a right to receive a gift presented to him by the king, as the greatest favourite in the court; his being a guilty criminal is no prejudice at all to his receiving a gift; yea, his being so qualifies him for receiving the pardon. So, here, Christ's being the gift of God, freely offered and presented, warrants the sinner to receive him, without respect to any qualifications but that of his being a sinner. Hunger is the best disposing qualification for meat, nakedness fits a man for clothing, &c. And that Christ seeks no other qualifications is evident from his counsel to Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17, 18: "Thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst be rich; and white raiment that thou mayst be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayst see."

5. You have not only an offer of Christ, but an express command requiring you to embrace him, for your warrant: 1 John iii. 23: "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Sirs, it is not a thing left optional to you, to embrace Christ or not, as you please;

no, you are concluded under a law, fenced with the severest penalty; "He that believeth not, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." The unbelieving sinner counteracts the authority of Heaven; and thus rushes upon "God's neck, upon the thick bosses of his buckler." You have no reason to doubt but that the command of believing is to you; for if you were not commanded to believe, your unbelief could not be your sin: "Where no law is, there is no transgression." You do not doubt, but you are commanded by the word of God, to read, hear, pray, sanctify the Sabbath, and to perform the other duties of the moral law; and because they are commanded, you aim at obedience. Now, believing is as peremptorily enjoined, yea rather more than any other, duty, inasmuch as the successful and acceptable performance of all other duties depends upon it. And, therefore, do not stand disputing your warrant, against the express authority of Heaven.

6. Besides the command of God, you have a promise of welcome to encourage you in believing: John vi. 37: "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." John iii. 16: "Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." But, say you, these promises may be to others, and not to me. I answer, The promise is endorsed to you, directed to you, in the external call and dispensation of the gospel, Acts ii. 39. There the apostle is preaching to a company of men, whose hands had lately been dipped in the blood of the Son of God. He calls them to faith and repentance. By what argument does he enforce the exhortation? Why, he tells them, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Where, it is plain, the promise is extended, first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles, who at that time were afar off; and then indefinitely, both to Jew and gentile, to whom the call of the gospel should reach; the external call, which is only here intended, howsoever the Spirit of the Lord did internally concur, being the alone foundation upon which the promise is to be received, and not the internal call of one person, which can never be a warrant of believing to another. And, therefore, as the apostle said to them, so say I to you, in the name of God, *The promise is unto you*, I mean, the promise of welcome; *Whosoever of you believeth, shall not perish.* This promise is not made to believers exclusively of others, but to every one that hears this gospel; for if so, we could call none to believe but such as have believed, which is most absurd. Well, then, let God's promise warrant you to believe in Christ; and if you do not think this sufficient, take his promise of welcome, ratified with

his oath, Ezek. xxxiii. 11: these being the "two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie."

7. Let the indefinite and absolute nature of the covenant of grace be your warrant for embracing the Lord Jesus. The covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, is conceived in the form of a blank bond or testamentary deed, where there is room left to every man to fill up his name, by the hand of faith. The strain and tenor of it is, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people: I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: I will sprinkle clean water upon them: I will put my Spirit within them: I will be merciful to their unrighteousness: I will subdue their iniquities."—Where, you see, the grant runs in an indefinite way; no man's name mentioned, neither any by name excluded. Why, what is the design of this, but that every man may be encouraged to subscribe his name, or to make application thereof to his own soul, in a way of believing, by which we are said to *take hold of God's covenant?* O sirs! the covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, (for now I abstract from his secret purposes, which are not at all the measure or rule of faith,) is just like a rope cast in among a company of drowning men; he that throws it in, cries to every one of them to take hold of the rope, promising to draw them safe to shore: so, God, in the gospel-dispensation, proposes his covenant to every one as a ground of faith, assuring them, that whosoever takes hold of his covenant, and receives his Christ, whom he hath "given for a covenant of the people,—shall not perish, but have everlasting life." For the Lord's sake, do not put this rope of salvation away from you, under a pretence that you know not if it be designed for you. Would you not reckon it ridiculous madness in any of these drowning men now mentioned, to fall to disputing whether the rope were cast in to them, when they are at the very point of sinking to the bottom? Would not every one of them gripe at it, with the utmost strength and vigour, without putting any question? Now, this is the very case, O sinner; thou art going down to the pit of eternal misery; God, by his ministers, cries to you to take hold of this rope of salvation: O then? "see that you refuse not him that speaketh from heaven;" do not dispute yourselves away from your own mercy.

8. Let the welcome that others have met with in coming to Christ be your encouragement to venture also. Never any really came to him but they met with a kindly reception. Ask the prodigal son, ask Mary Magdalene, Paul, and others, what entertainment they met with from this Saviour; they

will be ready to tell you, that they *obtained mercy.* Now, the same mercy that saved them, is as ready to save you. You do not doubt that Moses, David, Peter, Paul, and other saints who are now in glory, had sufficient warrant to believe. Sirs, you have the same grounds of faith as ever they had, the same God, the same Saviour, the same Bible, the same covenant, the same promises, the same faithfulness, of God to lean to, as ever they had; and these grounds of faith are so firm, that they never disappointed any that leaned to them: and therefore be encouraged to believe, as they did. O how will it for ever gall and torment unbelieving sinners in hell when they see others, who believed upon the same grounds that were common to them also, sitting down in the kingdom of heaven, and themselves shut up in utter darkness, with devils and damned spirits, because of their unbelief! And how will the devil himself upbraid unbelievers in hell, when fallen under the same condemnation with himself, that they had such fair warrants to believe in Christ, which he never had!

Object. 2. 'You tell me embrace Christ; but, alas! he is far away out of my reach: Christ is in heaven, how shall I win at him?'

Ans. Seeing you cannot come up to Christ, Christ is come down to you; and we bring him near to you, in "this word of salvation which we preach:" Is. xlvi. 12, 13: "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry." And therefore, "say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead;) for the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach," Rom. x. 6—8: Sirs, Christ is in this gospel, this word of faith and grace, which we, in the name of God deliver to you: and your faith must terminate immediately upon this word, otherwise you can never embrace him. As I believe or trust a man by his verbal or written promise; so I embrace Christ by the word of faith, or promises in the gospel. Suppose a responsible man residing in America, should send me his bill for any sum of money, that man and his money are brought near to me by his bill and security which he sends me: so here, though Christ be in heaven, and we upon earth, yet the word of faith, which we preach, brings him, his kingdom, righteousness, salvation, and whole fulness, nigh to every one of us, so that we need not *ascend into heaven, or descend into hell,* in quest of him.

Object. 3. 'My arms have been so defiled with the embraces of other lovers, that I am afraid Christ will never allow me

to embrace him.' For answer, I only refer you to Jer. iii. 1: "Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord." 'But,' say you, 'my sins are highly aggravated.' *Ans.* Is. i. 18: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Object. 4. 'You tell me embrace him; but, alas! I want an arm; I have no power to embrace him.' *Answ.* If thou hast a will to embrace him, the great difficulty is over, for there lies the principal stop: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Where God gives *to will*, he gives also *to do of his own good pleasure.* You say, you want the arm to embrace him; then do as the man with the withered hand did, attempt to "stretch it forth," in obedience to the command of Christ. Believing is a thing we must be essaying, even before we can find the Spirit of God working it in us effectually. We cannot pray, we cannot sanctify the Sabbath, we cannot think a good thought, till the Spirit of God work it in us; and yet we do not forbear these duties because we have no power to do them; so, although we have no power to believe, yet we should be trying to believe. The way that the Spirit of God works faith in the souls of the elect, is, by making them sensible of their own inability, that they may turn the work over upon his own hand, who "worketh all our works in us, and for us."

Object. 5. 'Let me aim at believing as much as I will, I shall never be able to effect it, if I be not among God's elect; for it is only they that are "ordained to eternal life," that "do believe."' *Ans.* This is an ordinary sophism of the grand enemy of salvation, by which he discourages sinners from believing in the Lord Jesus: and the fallacy or weakness of it will easily appear, by applying the objection to the ordinary business of human life. When meat is set before you, do you decline to take or use it, for this reason, that you do not know whether God has ordained it for you? Do you not say, Meat is for the use of man, and this meat is set before me, and therefore I will take it. You do not say, I will not plough or sow my ground, because I know not if ever God has decreed that it shall bring forth; or, I will not go home to my house, because I know not if ever God has decreed I should come the length. You would reckon a man mad, or beside himself, who would argue in this manner, in affairs of this nature. Why, the case is the very same: as the secret decrees of Heaven lie quite out of the road in the management of the affairs of this life; so neither are they at all to be the measure or rule of our actings in the great concerns of eternity: "Se-

cret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children." And the ground of your condemnation at the great day will not be, because you were not elected, but because you would not believe. The reprobate Jews were cut off, "because of their unbelief," Rom. xi. 7 and 20. I shall only add, that as you cannot know that the meat set before you is yours, in possession, till you take it: so neither can you ever know that Christ was ordained for you, till you take him into your possession by faith. And therefore, you must believe in Christ, before you know your election; otherwise you shall never know it, and shall never believe either. So much by way of exhortation.

I shall conclude this discourse with a short word to two sorts of persons.

First, To you who, like Simeon, have got him in the embraces of your souls, and who perhaps can say, to your sweet experience, with the spouse, "I have found him whom my soul loveth." All I say to you, shall be comprised in these two or three words.

1. O bless God, as Simeon did, for such a privilege; "let the high praises of God be in your mouths." I told you already, of several songs you have ground and reason to sing, which I shall not stand to resume. Only, to engage you to bless him, consider, that this is all the tribute he expects from you. Who will ever bless him, if not the "people that he has formed for himself?" Consider again, that this is the way to have blessings multiplied upon you; the thankful beggar is best served at the door both of God and man. The trumpeter loves to sound where there is an echo, which brings back the sound to his ears; so God loves to bestow his blessings, where he hears of them again in songs of praise and gratitude. Praise is the work of heaven, through a long eternity: now, they who are bound to that land afar off, should be lisping out the language of the land before they reach there.

2. Have you got Christ in the arms of your souls? O then improve your golden season: and while you are allowed to ride with the King, in the chariot of the wood of Lebanon, improve your interest with him, both for yourselves and others; particularly, entreat him, that he would revive his own work, which is under such a sad decay in our land at this day; study to "bring him into your mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived you."

3. Have you got him in your arms? Then follow the spouse's practice, Cant. iii. 4: "I held him, and would not let him go." O keep him in the embraces of your souls; his presence dispels clouds, and turns the shadows of death into

the morning; it is like oil to the chariot-wheels of the soul: light, life, liberty, peace, pardon, and plenty, are his continual attendants. And, remember, that his departure is of a very dangerous consequence. It is true, his real presence shall never depart; but yet his quickening, strengthening, and upholding presence may be withdrawn to such a degree, that you may go "mourning without the sun:" and if, through untenderness, you provoke him to withdraw, the quarrel may be pursued even to the gates of hell; so that you may be made to cry out, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me," Job vi. 4.

And, in order to your keeping him in the embraces of your souls,

1*st*, Beware of every thing that may provoke him to withdraw; particularly beware of security, which made him to withdraw from the spouse, Cant. v. 3, and 6, compared. Beware of pride; for "God resisteth the proud," and "beholds them afar off." Beware of worldly-mindedness: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him," Is. lvii. 17. Beware of unbelief, that root of bitterness, which causes to "depart from the living God." Distrust and "jealousy is the rage of a man;" much more is it provoking to God. Under the law, God appointed porters to keep watch at the door of the temple, that nothing might be suffered to enter, which might defile the dwelling-place of his name; thy soul and body, believer, is the temple of God; therefore guard against every thing that may defile the same.

2*dly*, If you would hold Christ in the embraces of your souls, keep grace in lively exercise; for these are the spikenard and spices that send out a fragrant smell for his entertainment. Keep the arm of faith continually about him; let the fire of divine love burn continually upon the altar of thy heart; let the anchor of hope be fixed within the veil; let the fountain of evangelical repentance be still running; and under your greatest attainments be humble, and take care to set the crown upon Christ's head, saying, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory."

The *second* sort of persons I would speak a little to, are those who, perhaps, are complaining of hidings and withdrawings, and are perhaps saying, I came to the temple to see if I could get Christ in my arms, but I am disappointed; yea, matters are come that length with me, that I am ready to "raze foundations," and to conclude that I am an utter stranger to him. All I have to offer to you, shall be comprised in these two or three things, with which I conclude.

1. Allow me to ask, If there be not a void and emptiness

in thy heart which the whole creation cannot fill, till Christ himself come and fill it? Are not ordinances, ministers, word, and sacrament, empty without him, like dry breasts? That says, thou art not altogether a stranger to him. And, therefore, do not entertain harsh thoughts of thyself; thy case is not at all unprecedented. What think ye of David, Psal. xiii.; of Asaph, Psal. lxxvii.; of Heman, Psal. lxxxviii.; yea, of Christ himself, who, through the withdrawing of his Father's love, was made to utter that heart-rending cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

2. Know, for thy comfort, that thy hiding Lord will return again: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," Psal. xxx. 4, 5: Isa. liv. 7, 8. The very breathings and longings of thy soul after him, are a pledge of his return; for "he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

3. When you cannot get Christ himself embraced, study to embrace his word of promise, as the Old Testament saints did, Heb. xi. 13. As a loving wife will lay the letters of her absent husband in her breast, and perhaps kiss his hand-writing; so lay the sweet promises of thy best Husband in thy bosom, and between thy breasts, until he himself return.

4. *Lastly*, Maintain your claim to him on the ground of the covenant, when you cannot maintain it upon a ground of sense; as a wife will maintain her relation to her husband, though he be both angry and absent. The Lord loves to have his people pleading kindness, and maintaining their claim upon the marriage contract of the new covenant, when they "walk in darkness, and see no light," Is. l. 10; and such a carriage as this, commonly lands in a happy meeting betwixt Christ and the souls of his people; for after believing, comes sealing.

SERMON X.

ON THE THRONE OF GRACE.

Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.—Psal. lxxxix. 14.

This psalm elegantly describes God's covenant of grace made with Christ, and his spiritual seed in him, under the type of God's covenant of royalty with David and his posterity; as is plain from many passages of the psalm, which are too

sublime and lofty to be restrained to David's temporary reign, or to that of his posterity, over the tribes of Israel, which quite expired in the revolution of a few ages.

The words read are a description of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom and administration: *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.*

Where we may notice, 1. The royal person who is the subject-matter of my text, and of the greatest part of the psalm: he is pointed at in the pronoun *thy.* This is none other than Christ, the true David, who was to reign in the latter days; and in whom David's family and kingdom shall be perpetuated for ever. This is the king who rules in righteousness, and whose seed is to be established for ever, whose throne shall be built up to all generations, ver. 4.

2. We have a badge of royal majesty and sovereignty ascribed to him; a *throne.* We frequently read in scripture of Christ's throne, Psal. xlv. 6, compared with Heb. i. 8: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." God's throne is threefold. (1.) His throne of glory; by which I understand the essential glory and majesty of the divine nature. This throne is inaccessible by finite creatures; hence 1 Tim. vi. 16, he is said to "dwell in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see." The light of glory that breaks forth from this throne of essential glory, is too bright and overwhelming either for men or angels immediately to behold. Hence the Seraphims, Is. vi. are represented as covering their faces with their wings, to veil their eyes from that dazzling glory of divine holiness shining forth from his glorious throne, which is high and lifted up.—O "who" of Adam's fallen posterity "shall stand in his holy place!" (2.) There is his throne of justice, where he judges sinners according to the tenor of the law or broken covenant of works. At this bar, every unbeliever is *condemned already;* and from this throne, their final and irreversible doom will pass at the last day; "Depart from me, ye cursed," &c.—Before this throne, no flesh living can be justified: "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Psal. cxxx. 3. (3.) We read of a throne of grace, Heb. iv. 16: "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." And this is the throne intended in my text, as is plain from the close of the verse, and what follows, "Mercy and truth go before the face" of him that sits on it; a "joyful sound" of peace, pardon, and salvation, issues forth from it to perishing sinners. "They walk in the light of" the King's "countenance, rejoice" in his "name, and are exalted in" his "righteousness," &c. Terror and amazement, death and ruin, are

the fruits of God's appearing to sinners from a throne of glory, or justice; and therefore, I say, it must be a throne of grace that is here intended.

3. In the words we have the firm foundation upon which this throne of grace stands; its *habitation*, or (as in the margin) *establishment*, is *justice and judgment:* the firmest foundation upon which any throne can be settled. The thrones of many earthly potentates are reared and built up with violence and oppression; but the throne of God's kingdom of grace is established in righteousness. The Son of God, as the Surety of sinners, submitted to satisfy *justice*, and to undergo the *judgment* and the condemnation of the broken law, by which he brings in everlasting righteousness; and upon this bottom or foundation the throne of grace is established, and upon this *basis* (as Pool reads it) will it stand for ever.

The doctrine I design to prosecute from the words is this:—

Doct.—"That God's administration of grace is founded upon the complete satisfaction of justice by his eternal Son as our Surety." Or take it thus: "That justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon Christ as our Surety, is the basis and foundation of a throne of grace. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne."

I only name two other places of holy writ for confirmation of the doctrine. The one we have, Rom. iii. 24—26, where the apostle tells us, "We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past;—to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Where it is plain, that the grace of God in pardoning and justifying the ungodly sinner, is founded upon the propitiatory sacrifice of the death of Christ; and grace's administration being built upon this ground, God is just in pardoning the sinner that believes in Jesus. Another clear text to the same purpose we have, Rom. v. 21; where *grace* is said to "reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." The government of grace is founded on righteousness; that is, upon the righteousness of Christ, by which justice was satisfied in the execution of judgment upon the Surety.

In handling this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, observe the following method:—

I. I shall speak a little of this throne.

II. Of the basis or foundation of this throne.

III. Notice some pillars with which the throne is surrounded and supported.

IV. Inquire why God will have justice and judgment for the foundation of his throne of grace.

V. Apply the whole.

I. I say, I would *take a view of the throne.* Where again I shall, 1. Show what this throne is, and why so called. 2. Inquire what comfortable views of God a guilty sinner may have from this throne. 3. Offer a few scriptural remarks concerning it.

First, What is this throne, and why so called? In one word, then, By this throne of grace we are just to understand God manifesting himself in our own nature, and dealing with sinners through Christ according to the grace of the gospel. I take that word of the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 19, 20, to be a just account of what is intended by a throne of grace; "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" issuing forth a word of peace and reconciliation, that sinners might no more continue in their enmity, by dreading God as an implacable judge, or inexorable enemy, but might return to him as a reconciled God and Father. The reason of all which is subjoined, ver. 21: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Now, God's administration of grace toward guilty sinners through Christ, may be called a throne, either,

1. With allusion to the mercy-seat in the typical temple of Jerusalem. Israel was a theocracy; the Holy one of Israel was their King, and the mercy-seat was his throne. It was an eminent type of Christ, and the most solemn and sacred thing in all that typical administration. God is said to "dwell between the cherubims: Shine forth, O thou that dwellest between the cherubims:" so God dwelleth in Christ; yea, "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." And through him God dwelleth with man upon earth in a way of grace: through him we have entrance into the holiest, as Israel entered in the person of their high priest: in him we make atonement for our sins; and through him we receive the oracles of God, the revelations of the divine will: in him God meets and communes with us, as he did from the mercy-seat in the material temple, Exod. xxv. 17, 22. Or,

2. It may be called a throne, because of the glorious greatness and royal majesty of God that shines in this administration of grace through Christ. A throne, you know, is a seat of majesty, peculiar to sovereigns. Let none imagine, that

the glory of God is any thing lessened by his sitting upon a throne of grace, or that less reverence is due to him here, than upon a throne of glory or justice. Indeed, the boldness of faith is both allowed and commanded in our approaches to this throne; but this does not diminish, but increase the soul's reverence and holy fear; Psal. xcix. 1: "The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims, let the earth be moved." Every thing in and about God's throne of grace appears great. "For the beauty of his throne, he hath set it in majesty." For instance, take these few particulars:—

1*st*, There is royal majesty in the very name of him that sits on the throne. What is his name? O happy they that know it, and by the eye of faith can read it written on his thigh and vesture, "The King of kings, and Lord of lords," Rev. xix. 16. His name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace."

2*dly*, There is majesty in his looks: "Honour and majesty are before his face. His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars; yea, as the sun shining in his strength." There is such a majestic sweetness in the looks of his reconciled face, as "turns the shadow of death into the morning," and puts more gladness in the heart, than when corn, wine, and oil doth abound.

3*dly*, There is majesty in his words and voice; and every one that knows it will be ready to say, as in the words following my text, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." "The voice of the Lord," even from a throne of grace, "is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." This voice is "the power of God unto salvation." God's voice in the thunder makes the hinds to calve; but his voice from a throne of grace makes the dead to live, the dumb to sing, the lame man to leap like a hart: and no wonder, for his words are "spirit and life," yea, "words of eternal life." Christ speaks but a word to Mary, calls her by her name, *Mary;* and immediately her heart flutters with joy, and she cries out, "Rabboni, My Master." Cant. ii. 8: "The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh," &c.

4*thly*, There is majesty in his vesture. He is "clothed with a garment down to the foot;" a robe of righteousness, a garment of salvation. His whole mystical body, and every the least member is covered with it. When he sits on his throne, "his train," or, as in the margin, Is. vi. "the skirts thereof, filleth the temple. "All" his "garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia; out of the ivory palaces, whereby" the attendants of his throne are "made glad."

5*thly*, There is majesty in his sceptre. We read of the sceptre of Christ's kingdom, Psal. xlv. called "the rod of his

strength," Psal. cx. 2; by which we are to understand the gospel accompanied with the efficacy of his Spirit. There is such a majesty in this sceptre, when he sways it from a throne of grace, that it makes a "willing people" come in to him in the day of his armies.

6*thly*, There is majesty in the acts that are passed at a throne of grace; they are suitable to the nature of the throne. Acts of grace only pass at a throne of grace; acts of mercy at a mercy-seat. What an air of infinite majesty does God display from his throne of grace, when, beyond the expectation of men and angels, he issues forth that royal act of grace indemnifying rebels! "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins!" Is. xliii. 25.

7*thly*, The majesty of this throne appears from the heralds that are employed to intimate and proclaim the acts of grace that pass at it. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and all the ministers of Christ, what are they but so many heralds ordained by the King, who sits upon this throne, to intimate and proclaim his will of grace to a lost world? "Go ye into all the world," says he, "and preach the gospel to every creature." As if he had said, 'Go publish the acts of grace that are passed in favour of lost sinners at a throne of grace.'

8*thly*, There is majesty in the tributes and revenues of this throne. God's administration of grace in Christ brings in a large revenue of glory and praise to the crown of Heaven. Christ's kingdom of grace is wide and large. By his Father's grant "the Heathen, and uttermost parts of the earth are given to him for a possession." Psal. ii. And in all corners of his extended inheritance there is a tribute of glory and praise levied to him: Is. xxiv. 16: "From the uttermost part," or wing, "of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous;" that is, glory to "Jesus Christ the righteous." The church militant will be paying this tribute while the world stands. "Men are blessed in him;" and therefore "all nations," and all generations, "shall call him blessed," saying, "Blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory." Psal. lxxii. 17, 19. The church triumphant in heaven will be paying this tribute of praise to a throne of grace through an endless eternity: Rev. iv. 10: "They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power," &c. Rev. v. 8, 12.

9*thly*, There is majesty in the gifts and distributions which are made from this throne, and in the manner of his giving them. The gifts are worthy of the giver who sits on the throne. He gives himself, saying, "I will be their God." He

gives his Son, John iii. 16. He gives his Spirit, Luke xi. 13. He gives grace and glory, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. In a word, he gives all the sure mercies of David. Whatever comes from a throne of grace, must needs come in a way of gift, otherwise it would not suit the nature of the throne. It is below the majesty of the great King, whose name is *gracious*, to receive money or price from us. What he gives, he gives freely, without regard to any qualifications in us, Is. lv. 1; Rev. xxii. 17.

Secondly, I come to inquire what comfortable views of God are to be had by a guilty trembling sinner from this throne of grace. In general, every view of God here is inviting and encouraging. Unbelief is said to turn us away from the living God, Heb. iii. 12. And the way that it turns us away from him, is either by viewing him as upon a throne of absolute mercy; and so it turns us into a presumptuous confidence of safety, in a way of sin; or else it views him as upon a throne of inexorable justice; and so it turns us into the way of despair, and makes us fly and shun his presence as a destroying enemy. But faith views God as upon a throne of grace; and there it sees every perfection of the divine nature looking toward the sinner with an encouraging smile. More particularly,

1. God upon a throne of grace is to be seen as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," Eph. i. 3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 3. This is the great New Testament title of God; and O! what amazing grace and sweetness is in it! Christ is "our Lord, our Jesus, our Christ;" for "unto us" this "child is born, unto us" this "son is given:" he is our *Goel*, or "kinsman," our Elder Brother; and he being so near of kin to us, our blood relation, his relation to God descends to us through him, insomuch that his God is our God, and his Father is our Father. Hence, Christ directs Mary, John xx. 17, to go to his "brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." O what can be more encouraging! He is "your Father," because he is "my Father;" and "your God," because he is "my God." There is a rich mine of grace here, which angels desire to pry into. And it is some view of God in this relation to Christ, and to us through Christ, that first influences the sinner to turn to God. "I will arise," says the prodigal, "and go to my Father," Luke xv. 18. "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God," Jer. iii. 22. And a law-condemned sinner can never view him as his God and Father, but only as he is upon a throne of grace, or as he reveals himself in Christ.

2. From a throne of grace, God is to be seen as a God of love: yea, as love itself: 1 John iv. 16: "God is love." Ver. 10: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." So John iii. 16: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotton Son," &c. This love of God to lost sinners lay hid under a veil of wrath and justice, till the veil was rent by the satisfaction of Christ; and then indeed the love and kindness of God toward man appeared, venting itself in a most glorious and triumphant manner. O how encouraging is this view of God, to come to his throne, with the confidence of faith, for grace and mercy to help! It was this view that made David to cry, Psal. xxxvi. 7, "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."

3. From a throne of grace, a guilty sinner may view him as a God of peace: Heb. xiii. 20: "Now, the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus," &c. God's anger and fury began to burn against Adam, and all his posterity, immediately after the fall; and if a stop had not been put to it, it had consumed the earth with its increase, and burnt into the lowest hell: but no sooner did he receive the atonement, either in the promise, or actual payment of it, from our blessed Surety, but the flaming sword of justice is put up in its scabbard, and a gracious declaration issued forth, that "*fury is not in him.*" Indeed, if sinners will still deal with him as upon a thrown of justice or according to the terms of the law-covenant, they will find him to be "*a consuming fire,*" But, oh! who will be so mad as to set briers and thorns in battle against devouring flames! If they do, he "will go through them, and consume them together." Shall we not rather turn toward him as upon a throne of grace, where we shall hear him saying to the rebellious sinner, "Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me?" Is. xxvii. 4, 5.

4. From a throne of grace God is to be seen as a God with us: Matth. i. 23, compared with Is. vii. 14: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us." In Christ he is God with us, to avenge our quarrel upon the serpent, by bruising his head. "The day of vengeance is in mine heart." With us, to save from law, justice, the world, and all them that would condemn our souls, Psal. cix. 31. With us, to strengthen, help, and uphold us in all difficulties and dangers, with the right hand of his righteousness. And, oh! "if God be with us, who can be against us?" Hence is that triumphant song of the church, Psal. xlvi.

"The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea," &c.

5. Again, let us view him from a throne of grace, and we shall see him to be a promising God. The absolute God is to a sinner a threatening God. Nothing is to be heard from a throne of justice, but curses against every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. But, O sirs, come to a throne of grace, to God in Christ, and you shall see a promising God. 2 Cor. i. 20, we are told, "all the promises of God are in Christ, and in him yea and amen." Wherever we meet with any promise of God in the scriptures of truth, be it a promise of pardon, of peace, of counsel, of grace, or glory, for this life, or that which is to come; we should still remember, that they come from a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Christ, having fulfilled the proper condition of the promise by his obedience unto death, all the promises are his in the first instance; he is the first heir of them all: and in him, and through him, they are given out to us in the word as the immediate ground and foundation of our faith, with that intimation and advertisement, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as" lie within the compass of the gospel call, Acts ii. 39. O sirs, here is good news from a throne of grace, if you can but receive and credit it, with application to your own souls. As all threatenings of the word are spoken to the sinner in particular from a throne of justice, as if he were spoken to by name and surname; so all the promises of the word are directed to you in particular from a throne of grace, as though you were expressed in them by name. There is not a son of Adam, but has as much concern with that promise, Gen. iii. 15: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," as Adam himself had, in whose hearing it was uttered. Thus, I say, God from a throne of grace is to be seen as a promising God.

6. View God upon his throne, and you shall see him to be a God matching with our family. There is a twofold match that the great Jehovah makes with the family of Adam. (1.) He matches with our nature, joining it to himself by a hypostatical union in the person of his eternal Son; and thus, by marrying our nature into a personal union, he becomes related to the whole family of Adam, Jew and gentile. And this is "good tidings of great joy unto all people, that unto us," not to fallen angels, "is born in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," Luke ii. 10, 11. (2.) God, having married our nature, and, as it were, come upon

a level with us, that the inequality of the parties might be no stop, he proclaims his purpose of marriage with our very persons in the dispensation of the gospel. This proposal and proclamation of marriage coming forth from the throne of grace, is made to all without exception in the call of the gospel, Matth. xxii. 4. Yea, all the members of the visible church are in some sense married to the Son of God, Jer. iii. 14. And if it were not so, they could not be charged with adultery, or playing the harlot with other lovers as they are, ver. 1. But besides all this, in a day of power he determines the poor soul whom he hath loved with an everlasting love, to give its hearty assent and consent to the promise and proposal of marriage made by Christ in the gospel, saying, "I am the Lord's," Is. xliv. 5.

Thus he fulfils his promise, chap. liv. 5: "Thy Maker is thine Husband, (the Lord of hosts is his name;) and thy Redeemer the holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called." See also Hos. ii. 19, 20: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever."

7. God from a throne of grace is to be viewed as a pardoning God, issuing forth indemnities to guilty rebels, who have violated his laws, and trampled upon his authority. From a throne of justice he can only be viewed as a condemning God, pronouncing and executing the righteous sentence of a broken law upon sinners who have transgressed it; and when the holiest of saints that ever breathed come to deal with God upon this footing, they are made to cry out, "O Lord, who shall stand?" Nothing but "tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, to every soul of man that doth evil." But O glory to God in the highest, that by the reign of grace, through the righteousness of Christ, he appears in quite another view, namely, as a "God forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin;" yea, glorying in it as his prerogative, Is. xliii. 25; offering and bestowing his pardons upon the guiltiest of criminals, Is. i. 18: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

8. From a throne of grace God appears to us as a God of infinite bounty and liberality. And O what a pleasant view is this to the poor and needy! Jam. i. 5: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." From a throne of grace he "gives," and gives "liberally," and gives "without upbraiding." O sirs, grace is not for inholding, but for outgiving; grace could not be grace if it were otherwise. Never was there a throne like this throne of grace, which

has its very nature and standing by liberality. How soon would it spend the substance of the greatest and richest kings upon earth, to give to every one that had a mind to ask! If they kept open doors and open treasures for all, and made every one welcome to come and take whatever they pleased, how soon would their treasuries be emptied. But, the treasuries of this throne are not only inexhaustible, but they are not in the least impaired by outgiving: however much grace has been given out from this throne to the sons of men, (and the distributions already have been very large,) yet there is as much grace behind as ever. Yea, the very glory, riches, and splendour of this throne, lie in the large, free, and liberal distributions that are made to poor and needy sinners, who come to it for grace and mercy; and the King makes all welcome without exception: Is. lv. 1: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c.

9. He is to be viewed from a throne of grace as a prayer-hearing God: Psal. lxv. 2: "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." He sits upon this throne encouraging all who have any business with him to come forward with boldness, and present their petitions to him, assuring them that their bills of request shall not be cast over bar: Matth. vii. 7: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The prayer of faith is the stated means of God's appointment for drawing forth promised mercy and grace: Ezek. xxxvi. 37: "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." So open-hearted is the King, that his heart opens his ear to hear, and his hand to give. When we have asked great things of him, he chides us, because we have not asked more and greater things; and bids us ask, and we shall "receive, that our joy may be full." The voice of prayer makes a sweet and melodious sound at this throne: Cant. ii. 14: "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

10. *Lastly*, View him upon a throne of grace, and you shall see him as your own God. Wherever we find God in all the word appearing from a throne of grace to sinners, we shall still find him asserting himself to be *their God* in Christ. Upon this throne he appears to Abraham: and what says he to him? Gen. xvii. 7: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." When this covenant was renewed, or of new published at Mount Sinai, he says, "I am the Lord thy God." This is the ordinary style of the covenant

of grace which issues from a throne of grace; "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Now, what can be God's design in appearing to us sinners after such a manner, but that we, who had forfeited all claim to him by the breach of the first covenant may claim him as our God, even our own God, upon the footing of free grace. There is so much sweetness, grace, mercy, love, and salvation in God manifesting himself from a throne of grace, that the soul, whenever it views him by faith, is laid under an invincible, though sweet necessity, to claim him as its own God in Christ, saying with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God. He that is my God, is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. And faith having once fixed the soul's claim to God in Christ upon the covenant ground and grant, it will maintain its claim to him upon the same ground, even when clouds and darkness are round about him; as the church does, Is. xlix. 14: "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Thus you see what amiable views of the divine Majesty are to be had from a throne of grace, or from God manifesting himself in the flesh, dealing with sinners according to gospel-grace.

I come, in the *third* place, to offer a few scriptural remarks respecting this throne.

1. I remark, that this throne is called "the throne of God, and of the Lamb," Rev. xxii. 1. By which expression we are taught, that both Father and Son are equally glorified in this administration of grace; there is no disjoining of them, either as to their essence, interests, glory, or administration. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," says Christ. As they act by a joint power in the kingdom of providence; so they act in the same manner in the kingdom of grace. And it is the will of God "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; and every tongue must confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." If the throne were only called, "The throne of God," it were enough to scare a guilty sinner from ever looking towards it: but when it is called, "The throne of God, and of the Lamb," this furnishes our souls with a more amiable view of the divine Majesty, and declares him to be a God of peace, and that he is like a meek lamb to every soul that comes to him in the way of his own ordination: his terror needs not make us afraid.

2. I remark, that "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds out of" this throne, Rev. xxii. 1. By which I know some (and I was once of their mind) understand only those "rivers of pleasures," and that "fulness of joy," which the saints in glory are possessed of in the immediate

vision and fruition of God for evermore: I do not exclude this meaning. But to me it is clear, from the 17th verse of the same chapter, that the river of water of life, spoken of in the 1st verse, has a respect even to the church militant here upon earth; because, ver. 17, there is an invitation by the Spirit and the bride given to all to come, and take of these waters of life freely, which proceed, ver. 1, from the throne of God, and of the Lamb; and therefore I do think that, by this river issuing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, we are to understand the Holy Spirit of God, which proceeds from the Father and the Son, with his quickening, cleansing, and comforting influences. This is compared frequently to a river or flood in scripture, Is. xxxv. 6, 7, and xliv. 3. Not a rivulet or brook, but a river, to signify the plentiful, free, and liberal communications of the Spirit and grace of God that should follow upon Christ's exaltation to the throne in our nature. And this is not a muddy pool, but a "pure" river: the Spirit of Christ is a Holy Spirit, and purifies the soul from the filth of sin. It is a river of "water of life," because he has life in himself, and quickens the soul that is dead in trespasses and sins. It is said to be "clear as crystal," because he is a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and opens the eye-sight of the blinded understanding to know the things that are freely given us of God."

3. I remark, that the Lamb is said to be "in the midst of the throne," Rev. v. 6, and vii. 17; which not only signifies the glory of his exalted state, having all power in heaven and in earth, but more especially I judge this expression designed for the encouragement of faith, that we may "come with boldness to the throne, for grace and mercy to help in time of need." Why, the meek and mild Lamb is "in the midst of the throne," ready to take us by the hand, to hear and plead our cause. He is a ready and diligent Advocate; he is never out of the way, or absent when our cause is tabled, as other advocates and friends many times are, when we have most need of them, and of their moyen and interest. "We have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." We have him as our Advocate with the Father, continually appearing in the presence of God for us.

4. I remark, that "the seven Spirits are before the throne," Rev. i. 4. So Rev. v. 6: "The seven Spirits are sent forth from the Lamb as it were slain, in the midst of the throne, into all the earth." By which is signified the peculiar office of the Holy Ghost in the application of the redemption purchased by Christ; called "seven," because of the variety of his influences and operations. These are said to be "before the

throne," to show how ready the Spirit of God is to execute all the acts of grace that are emitted from the throne of grace, and to make them effectual by his infinite energy and power. And these seven spirits of God are said to be "sent forth from the Lamb as it were slain," to let us know, that the sending, or down-pouring of the Spirit, and of his influences, is the fruit and effect of the atoning sacrifice of Christ's death, and of his prevalent intercession, grounded upon his propitiation.

5. I remark, that this throne "standeth on mount Zion," Rev. xiv. 1. The Lamb stands there, and where the Lamb stands, there must the throne stand also, for he is always in the midst of it. By "mount Zion," which is an Old Testament expression, I understand the church of God, which is partly militant on earth, and partly triumphant in heaven.—They are all surrounding the same throne; like Jacob's ladder, the foot of it stood in Bethel upon earth, but the top of it reached the heavens. So this throne of grace stands upon the earth in Bethel, the house of the living God, though indeed the top of it is high and lifted up above the height of the highest heavens: and all believers are come to it, whether they be in heaven or earth, though some be a step higher than others, the glory of saints militant and triumphant differing only in degrees. Let a believer be in what part of the world he will, still he will by faith make his way to a throne of grace, that is, to a reconciled God in Christ, who is every where present, and a very present help in the time of need.

6. I remark, that this throne is surrounded with a "rainbow:" Rev. iv. 3: "There was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." Which I pass at present, because I intend a discourse upon it apart.

7. I remark, that this throne is crowded with innumerable attendants in the church militant and triumphant, who are all paying the tribute of worship and homage to him that sits upon it: Rev. v. 11—13: "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature, which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Where you see all the saints in heaven and earth are surrounding

this glorious throne of which we now speak. O blessed are they whom he chooses and causes to approach to him among this numerous company.

8. I remark, that the basis and foundation of this throne is "the righteousness of Christ." It is laid in justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Son of God. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." But this leads to,

II. The *second* thing proposed in the method, which is to *speak of the foundation of this throne*, and that is *justice and judgment.*

For clearing of this, 1. Take a few propositions. 2. A few properties of this foundation.

First, Take a few propositions.

1. 'When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.'

2. Man, by the breach of this covenant, has incurred the penalty thereof, 'whereby all mankind have lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.'

3. God, in his amazing grace and love both admitted of a Surety, and provided one, even his eternal Son, who voluntarily undertook our redemption, and was actually substituted in our room. *He laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

4. The Son of God, in consequence of his undertaking as our Surety, having assumed our nature, and put himself in our law-place, a cry was made in heaven by justice, '*Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow: smite the shepherd*, make thyself drunk with his royal blood; do not spare him, exact the debt of him to the utmost farthing.' He endured the curse in our room, *being made a curse for us.*

5. Whatever justice demanded of the Surety, it was executed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Did justice demand that the cautioner should be of one common nature with the sinner? This accordingly is executed; for "the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" he was made of a woman, and took part of the children's flesh; he became our kinsman, that the right of redemption might belong to him. Did justice demand that the honour of the holy law should be repaired by a perfect obedience? This accordingly is executed by the Surety; for he "fulfilled all righteousness, he magnified the law, and made it honourable." Did justice demand that the curse and penalty of the law should be endured? This is ac-

cordingly executed; for he "was made a curse for us," that he might "redeem us from the curse of the law." Did justice demand that the head of the old serpent should be bruised, and that vengeance should be executed upon the grand enemy of God's glory, and of man's good and happiness? This accordingly is done; for he "spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them in his cross." Did justice demand that sin, the first-born of the devil, should be put out of the way? This accordingly is done; for he "finished transgression, and made an end of sin: he condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us."

6. Justice being satisfied, and the law magnified, and the Lord well pleased for the righteousness' sake of the glorious Surety, God thereupon rears up a throne of grace, and proclaims himself to be "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious,—forgiving iniquity and transgression, and sin," &c.; and accordingly passes acts of grace from this throne, saying, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people: I will be merciful to their unrighteousness: I will sprinkle them with clean water;" and the like. And thus you see upon what basis or foundation the throne of grace is reared.

Secondly, I shall give you a few qualities or properties of the foundation of this throne, where grace reigns through righteousness.

1. It is an *ancient* foundation; for Christ was "set up from everlasting, or ever the earth was;" he is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And upon the credit of his promise to satisfy justice in the fulness of time, all the Old Testament saints were saved.

2. It is a foundation of God's own laying; "Behold, I lay in Zion a foundation." He had pleasure in laying it. When he laid it decretively from all eternity, he did it with pleasure: "I have found a ransom:" he speaks of it with a kind of gloriation and boasting: "I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have found David my servant." When he laid it actually in his incarnation, he did it with pleasure: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." When he laid this foundation doctrinally in Zion, he did it with pleasure, Is. xxviii. 16, he proclaims to the world, declaring, that "whosoever builds upon it, shall not be ashamed."

3. It is a firm foundation upon which God has built his throne of grace; it is the surest foundation on which a throne can be built. The throne of iniquity, or the throne that is founded upon injustice, shall surely be overturned: but here is a throne built upon justice and judgment. Christ is called a *rock*, "Upon this rock I will build my church;" and the church and the throne of grace have the same bottom.

4. It is a *tried* foundation. Justice tried it, and found it firm and stable; when mountains of wrath and vengeance were rolled upon it, it bore up under all. The powers of hell tried to overturn this foundation; but their kingdom and power was broken in pieces in the enterprise; the little stone cut out of the mountain, broke the head of the great Goliah. The saints have all tried this foundation, and proclaim it sufficient to bear their weight; yea, it is sufficient to bear the weight of all mankind, yea, of millions of worlds, if they existed, and would venture upon it; "He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him."

5. It is a *precious* foundation: "We are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The gold and silver cannot equal it; the topaz of Ethiopia is not to be named in one day with it; it is more glorious and excellent by far than all the mountains of prey.

6. It is a most *beautiful* foundation. What God says of his church, Is. liv. 11, is much more true of the throne of grace, "Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires." There is such a beauty in this foundation of the throne of grace, that it reflects a beauty upon every one that approaches it; so that they come away from it "like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

7. To crown all, it is a *perpetual*, *durable*, and *everlasting* foundation: and hence comes the perpetuity of the throne itself, Psal. lxxxix. 4: "Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations." So Psal. lxxii. 17: "His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun." The priesthood of Christ is the foundation of the throne of grace; and this priesthood is to continue, by the oath of God: Psal. cx. 4: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." I proceed now to,

III. The *third* general head in the method. Having viewed the foundation, let us next take a view of some pillars with which this throne, this royal administration of grace, is supported, and which contribute not a little to its stability. And, not to enlarge upon particulars, the foundation of this throne being laid in the satisfaction of justice, all the other perfections, or attributes of the divine nature, fall in for the support of the reign and administration of grace. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace kiss each other;" they sweetly join hands in promoting this glorious design, as you see in the context. O, says infinite wisdom, all my immense treasures shall dwell bodily in the man Christ Jesus,

he shall be "the wisdom of God in a mystery," that so he may be in a capacity to hold the reins, and manage all things in heaven and earth, for the advancement of the glory of free grace, reigning through righteousness to eternal life. O, says infinite power, "with him my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him" in his undertaking. "I will beat down his foes before his face, and greatly plague them that hate him." O, says holiness, although I be "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," yet I plainly see, that justice being satisfied for the guilt of sin in the death of the Son of God, the filth of it shall be hid out of my sight, and his blood shall be a laver to wash it away, that I be not offended: and therefore I am so far from hindering this administration of grace through Christ, that I lay myself in pledge to promote and carry on the glorious design: "Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David." O, says mercy, I am so related to grace, that I cannot shun to give my vote, that the throne of grace should go on apace, "My mercy will I keep for him for evermore. My mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted." O, says the faithfulness and veracity of God, whatever promises grace has made, in a covenant of grace, I bind and oblige myself to make them good: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle" of God's word of grace shall never fall to the ground. "I will not take my love from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." And thus I have given you a short view of these glorious pillars which contribute to the establishment of the throne of grace, upon the foundation of justice and judgment.

IV. The *fourth* thing is, to *inquire why it is God will have justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Surety, to be the foundation of his throne of grace?*

I shall not multiply reasons for this, but shall only touch upon one for all, which the apostle gives, Rom. v. 31; namely, "That grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." So that, if it be asked, Why will God have it so, that justice satisfied, and judgment executed on the Surety, should be the foundation of the throne of grace? The answer is, "That grace might reign through righteousness;" that the glory of grace might be displayed in consistency with the honour of divine justice.

Here a question offers, How does grace reign, or how is the glory of grace displayed in and by the righteousness of a surety?

Answ. 1. Grace reigns and is displayed in the contrivance of this righteousness; for it is the device of infinite wisdom,

animated and inspired by free grace. When man had fallen under the sentence of the law, justice was ready to execute judgment upon him: but grace cries, Stop, and stay thy hand, for "I have found a ransom." 2 Sam. xiv. 14: "God doth devise means, that his banished be not expelled." Our first parents provoked God to drive them out of Paradise, and accordingly they were actually driven out of his presence; but infinite wisdom, actuated and animated by the bowels of mercy, contrives a way in which banished man may be brought home again in consistency with justice, and that is by the righteousness of the Messiah.

2. Grace reigns and is displayed in the acceptation of this righteousness. What but infinite love and grace could prevail with inexorable justice, so far to dispense with the rigour of the law, as to admit of a surety's righteousness in the room of the sinner! But this I touched upon already. And therefore,

3. Grace reigns in the impetration of this righteousness; for "God," in his amazing grace, "sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." That righteousness by which we are justified, is the very righteousness of God in our nature; he wrought it by his doing and dying. O, how does grace reign here! Faith's views of this may fill us all with wonder, and make us cry with the church, Is. lxiii. 1, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?"

4. Grace reigns in the revelation of this righteousness. Grace was not content to contrive and bring about this righteousness, but the news of it must be published and proclaimed to a lost world, as it were by sound of trumpet. Hence the apostle, Rom. i. 17, when he would give us an account of the sum and substance of the gospel, does it in one word, "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation; for therein is revealed the righteousness of God." O how forward was the grace of God, to have the proclamation respecting the satisfaction of justice by a surety issued out! Adam had scarce sinned, till grace intimates the plot to him in the first promise; "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." The Messiah is scarce born in Bethlehem, till an angel is despatched from heaven to notify it to the shepherds; "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

5. Grace reigns and is displayed in the appropinquation, or the bringing near of this righteousness to the sinner in a preached gospel. Not only does grace reveal the righteous-

ness of God, but it brings it near to the sinner, in order to be accepted and received: Is. xlvi. 12, 13: "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off," &c. It is brought near to the sinner, just as the manna was brought near to Israel, when it fell about their tent-doors; they had not far to go for it.

6. Grace reigns and is displayed in the imputation of this righteousness. And, indeed, there is a great mystery of grace here, that cannot be expressed in words; how a guilty sinner, that has violated the law, and is obnoxious to justice, comes to be sustained in the sight of God as though he had fulfilled the law, and satisfied justice in his own person, and to be put in a condition to say, "Who shall lay any thing to *my* charge? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?"

7. Grace reigns in the soul's acceptation of this righteousness by faith. There is nothing in all the world that runs so cross to proud nature, as to renounce all its own righteousness, its obedience, duties, endeavours, its own grace and holiness, in point of acceptance, and to submit to the righteousness of another, and to be obliged to the doing and dying of the Son of God alone. This was a stone of stumbling to the Jews; they could never imagine any other way of justification before God, but "by the works of the law;" and therefore they "went about to establish a righteousness of their own, and would not submit unto the righteousness of God." Now, I say, to unhinge a sinner from this legal foundation, to bring down these towering imaginations of a righteousness in ourselves, to cast down the "refuge of lies, and to bring the proud conceited sinner that length, as to own and acknowledge, that his own righteousness is but "as filthy rags," saying, "Surely in the Lord" only "have I righteousness and strength; in him" will I "be justified, and in him" alone will I "glory." I say, grace reigns, and is wonderfully displayed in all this.

8. Grace reigns through righteousness, inasmuch as that it is by the revelation of this justice-satisfying righteousness, that grace conquers and powerfully subdues sinners, brings them under its own government and dominion. The apostle, speaking of believers, Rom. vi. 14, says, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace;" that is, ye are brought in under the government and administration of grace. But what way is it that grace conquers them? what is the great engine made use of for this end? It is just the revelation of the righteousness of Christ in the gospel, Rom. i. 15: "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation." What way? Mark

the expression, ver. 17: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." From which it is plain, that the preaching of an imputed righteousness, as the alone ground of a sinner's acceptance, is the very pith and marrow of the gospel. Some, now-a-days, have got a way of preaching, which, I believe, will never convert a soul; they deliver fine elegant harangues of morality, adorning them with all the flowers of rhetoric; but, in the mean time, they do but stink in the nostrils of a solid Christian. Why? Because though they preach up a moral righteousness, yet they have little or nothing of the righteousness of Christ, which is the very basis and foundation of a throne of grace: and when that is wanting, they want the true Shibboleth of the gospel; for the gospel is a revelation of "the righteousness of God;" and this makes it to be "the power of God unto salvation."

Here I judge it not amiss, to subjoin a quotation from the great and judicious Owen to this purpose, in his commentary on the Hebrews, chap. v 7: 'Some are of the mind,' says he, 'that the whole business of ministers is to be conversant in and about morality. For this fountain and spring of grace,' the righteousness and satisfaction of Christ; 'this basis of eternal glory; this evidence and demonstration of divine wisdom, holiness, righteousness, and love, this great discovery of the purity of the law, and vileness of sin; this first, great, principal subject of the gospel, and motive of faith and obedience; this root and cause of all peace with God, all sincere and incorrupted love toward him, and all joy and consolation from him, they think it scarcely deserves a place in the objects of their contemplation, and are ready to guess, that what men write and talk about it, is but *phrases, canting*, and *fanatical*. But such as are admitted into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, will not so easily part with their immortal interest and concern therein. Yea, I fear not to say, that he is likely to be the best, the most humble, the most holy and fruitful Christian, who is most sedulous and diligent in spiritual inquiries into this great mystery, of the reconciliation of God unto sinners by the blood of the cross, and in the exercise of faith about it. Nor is there any such powerful means of preserving the soul in a constant abhorrence of sin, and watchfulness against it, as a due apprehension of what it cost to make atonement for it."

V. The *fifth* thing was the *application* of the doctrine. And the *first* use shall be of *information*, in the following particulars:—

1. Is it so that justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the ever-blessed Surety, is the foundation of a throne of grace? then, hence we may see what an expensive piece of

work a throne of grace is. Why, the foundation of it is laid in the death and blood of the Son of God. When God is about to erect a throne of glory for himself, as the great Creator and Governor of the world, he makes little or no ceremony about it; he only says, *Let it be*, and immediately heaven, which is his throne, and the earth, which is his foot-stool, springs out of nothing in wonderful order; but when the throne of grace is to be reared, justice must be satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Son of God; he must "become sin for us, and a curse for us, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, and we made the righteousness of God in him."

2. See from this doctrine, the glory of a gospel-dispensation. We read sometimes of *the glorious gosped of the blessed God;* why, here is the reason of the denomination, the royal majesty of the grace of God reigning through the righteousness of his eternal Son, is here displayed and manifested. God has erected a glorious high throne for the place of his sanctuary; and "for the beauty of his ornament, he hath set it in majesty," Ezek. vii. 20. There was much of the divine glory manifested in the delivery of the law on mount Sinai, and in the typical dispensation of the Old Testament: but, O! all that glory vanished, like a shadow, at the greater glory that is manifested in the actual erection of a throne of grace, by the incarnation, obedience, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the manifestation of him that is made by the word now under the New Testament: 2 Cor. iii. 7—11. "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." O let us prize our mercy, who live under the New Testament dispensation, in which "all we with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

3. If it be so that justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon Christ, is the foundation of a throne of grace; then, see hence, that the salvation of a lost sinner by grace is very consistent with the honour of divine justice; why, justice and judgment are the very habitation of this throne. Some poor

souls, when they fall under the challenges and awakenings of conscience, are ready to think and say, O it is needless for me ever to think that God will extend his grace and mercy to me: why, my sins are of such a bloody hue, of such an aggravated nature, that I cannot think that ever it will stand with the justice of God to pity and pardon, or save the like of me. But, O sirs, will you consider, that God has already taken care for the satisfaction of his justice, in the death and blood of his eternal Son, and laid the foundation of his throne of grace upon that. And therefore, you are not to think or imagine, that justice will be your enemy in coming for grace and mercy to a throne of grace: no, no; God is just and righteous in saving the sinner that comes to this throne, as well as in damning the sinner that will not come. Yea, let me tell you, that the justice of God gets more glory in saving of sinners through the blood and satisfaction of Jesus, than in the damnation and ruin of all the reprobates and unbelievers in the world; for the believing sinner takes the ransom that God has found, and presents that to justice, and the Lord is well pleased with this; he smells a sweet savour in this propitiatory sacrifice.

4. See hence, the excellency and infinite value of the blood of Jesus, and how much we owe to it; why, by this blood justice is satisfied, and thereby a foundation laid for a throne of grace, to which we are called to come with boldness: Heb. x. 19: "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." There are these two things effected by the blood of Jesus, from which our obligations to it will especially appear. (1.) By this blood sprinkled upon the tribunal of justice, the tribunal itself is turned into a mercy-seat: an angry God is reconciled and pacified, and invites the guilty sinner to come for grace and mercy to help him. (2.) By this blood the curse of the law is abolished. The curse of a broken law stands as an insuperable bar in the way of our access to God; but now, by the blood of Jesus, this hand-writing that was against us is cancelled, being nailed to the cross. And whenever this blood is applied by faith, the sentence goes forth from a throne of grace. There is no more condemnation for the man, for he is in Christ, under the covert of blood. It is God that justifieth him; who is he that dare condemn him? God, the great Lawgiver, justifieth; and what has any other to say against him, if the Lawgiver acquit him?

5. Has God erected a throne of grace at the expense of the death and satisfaction of his eternal Son? Then I would have you try, whether you be courtiers about this throne. Wast thou ever at a throne of grace, man, woman? Perhaps

you may think this a very strange question. 'Why,' say you, 'have you so little charity as to think that we never prayed? Blessed be God, we are at a throne of grace every morning and evening; we read, hear, pray, communicate, and yet will you ask, if ever we were at a throne of grace?' I answer, A man may do all that, and never yet really come to this throne, that has judgment and justice for its foundation and habitation. What, then, is it to come to a throne of grace? *Ans.* It is to come out of yourself to a God in Christ, as your only hope and help; it is to receive Christ and rest on him; for all those ends and uses for which he is revealed and offered in the glorious gospel. In one word, to come to a throne of grace, is, by faith in the blood of Jesus, to enter into the presence of a holy God. 'How shall I know if ever I thus came to this throne?' *Ans.* There are a few things in the context which follows my text, which may be improved as marks for your trial. As,

1*st*, If ever you have come to a throne of grace, you have seen mercy and truth going before the face of him that sits on the throne. *Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne;* and what follows? *Mercy and truth shall go before* his *face:* that is, not only mercy in the abstract, but mercy connected with, and conveyed in a word of truth. I think it very remarkable, that these two, mercy and truth, are commonly linked together in scripture, Psal. lxxxv. 10: "Mercy and truth are met together." John i. 17: "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;" and ver. 14: Christ is said to be *full of grace and truth.* Why are these joined together? The plain reason is, because all the mercy that is in the heart of God, is conveyed in a true and faithful word of promise: so that whatever mercy we want from God, we must always look for it in a promise or word of truth: "What God has joined, no man must put asunder." Some have a way of grasping at the mercy of God absolutely considered, never viewing it as it is in Christ, or as it is in the covenant and word of truth. But, sirs, the mercy of God in this view never saved a sinner: they who really come to a throne of grace, and view God as he is in Christ, see mercy, and truth coupled together, and they dare not claim mercy, but upon the ground of the promise or covenant established in Christ; and *this is all their salvation.*

2*dly*, If ever you were really at the throne, you have heard the joyful sound that issues out from the throne: ver. 15: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound," namely, the joyful sound of the King's voice that sits on the throne of grace. The voice of God in Christ has a certain peculiar air with it, by which the believer knows it from the voice of a stranger: "My sheep," says Christ, "know my voice." Cant.

ii. 8, no sooner does Christ speak, but immediately the spouse cries, "It is the voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh." O, sirs, you are all hearing the sound of a man's voice; but I ask, Do you hear the voice of Christ coming forth from a throne of grace? His words are *spirit*, and they are *life*. They have such a divine majesty and melody in them, that they make an echo of praise to rebound back to heaven: hence we read, that, upon the publication of the gospel among the gentiles, songs are heard ascending upward, Is. xxiv. 16.

3*dly*, If ever you came to this throne, and saw the King upon the throne, you will highly value the light of his countenance; you will put such a value upon his smiles, that you cannot think of living without them. His countenance will make day with you; and when he withdraws, all the stars of created comforts cannot supply his room.

4*thly*, The King's name will be like "ointment poured forth:" ver. 16: "In thy name shall they rejoice all the day." His name will be a strong tower to you, to which you will flee for safety; and there will be such a savour in it to thy soul, that thou wilt be ambitious to cause his name to be remembered to all generations, that the people may praise him for ever and ever.

5*thly*, If ever you were at this throne, and dignified with his acceptance and approbation, you will look upon his righteousness as the only ground of your promotion and advancement: ver. 16: "In thy righteousness shall they be exalted." 'O,' will the poor soul say, 'it was not my goodness, my holiness, my righteousness, that brought me to this honour: no, it was the obedience and death of my Surety, the righteousness that he brought in: "In him have I righteousness; and I count all things but loss and dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith" in him.'

6*thly*, He will be "the glory of your strength," and his strength will be your glory, ver. 17. When you are helped to the exercise of any grace, to do or suffer any thing for him, you will ascribe the glory of it to him alone: "Not I, but the grace of God in me: Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory."

7*thly*, If ever you were at this throne of grace, you will be much taken up in admiring the freedom of his grace and love reigning through imputed righteousness; you will see grace written in capital letters on every step of the throne of grace, and in every step of your salvation: ver. 17: "In thy favour our horn shall be exalted." Was I elected from eternity? My election is of grace. Was I redeemed by the blood of Jesus? This is "according to the riches of his grace." Am

I justified, sanctified, adopted, or effectually called? It is grace, grace that has done all; "by the grace of God I am what I am."

8thly. If you be acquainted with a throne of grace, a God of grace will be your only sanctuary, ver. 18: "The Lord is our defence;" and what time you are afraid, you will trust in him. He will be to you "a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land: for he is the strength of the poor, and of the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." When you are pursued by sin, by Satan, by the law, by conscience; when you are surrounded with trouble from without, or from within, you will turn to him as your "strong hold," as it is said of the "prisoners of hope."

9thly, If you be acquainted with a throne of grace, the King that sits upon the throne will be your only Lord and Sovereign: ver. 18: "The holy One of Israel is our King." You will renounce allegiance to other lords, and make mention of his name, saying, "The Lord is my judge, the Lord is my lawgiver, the Lord is my king; he will save me." And you will love your King so well, that you will love his law, and approve of it as "holy, just, and good," because it is a transcript of the holiness of his nature; you will say, with David, "I esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right: His yoke is easy, and his burden is light." Now, try yourselves by these things, whether you be courtiers at this throne of grace, which hath justice satisfied, and judgment executed on the Surety, for its basis or foundation. You may easily remember these marks, because they are all in the text, and the three following verses.

6. Is it so, that God has erected a throne of grace at the expense of the satisfaction of his justice? O then, sirs, I would invite you all to come to this throne. People usually need little entreaty to come to the thrones of earthly princes; every body is ambitious to be near the throne. Well, I invite, I call, beseech, and entreat you to draw near to the throne of the Prince of the kings of the earth, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Now, that I may carry home the exhortation the more effectually upon your souls, I shall endeavour to answer and obviate a few practical questions, which will readily arise in your minds upon such a call or exhortation.

Quest. 1. Who is it that calls us? We hear you that are ministers calling us to come to the throne of grace; that is not enough to us, we would know if the King himself would

make us welcome, I answer, It is not we, but the King himself that calls you to come to his throne. We that are ministers are only the heralds sent forth to intimate and proclaim the King's pleasure; and if you ask for our instructions or commission, we shall very readily produce them, that you may read them with your own eyes under the King's hand. 2 Cor. v. 19—21: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" (there is the throne of grace, to wit, "God reconciling the world to himself;" our commission follows in the close of the 19th, and in the 20th verses;) "and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Now, there is our commission, the word of reconciliation is committed to us, that is, the publication of this gospel of the grace of God; and when we invite you to come to a reconciled God in Christ, we speak in the name of God, and we are in the very room of Christ. What would you think, if Christ were standing in my place speaking to you, requiring and inviting you to come to his throne for grace and mercy? Well, the case is the very same, when we act by commission from him. So, then, it is God that calls you by us.

Quest. 2. Whom does he call? Does God call every body to come to his throne of grace? That is not an ordinary thing; all the subjects are not allowed to come near the throne, but only some peculiar favourites. *Answ.* It is true, it is so among earthly princes; it is only some peculiar favourites whom they allow to approach the throne or seat of majesty, otherwise their thrones would be too much crowded.

But it is otherwise in the court of the great King, who has justice and judgment for the habitation of his throne; for all and every one that hears the joyful sound of the gospel, which issues out of this throne, are invited and called to come to the throne of grace. And this will appear if you consider,

1. The extensiveness of the commission which God has given to ministers: Mark xvi. 15: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" that is, to Jews and gentiles, barbarians, Scythians, bond, or free, noble, and ignoble. Every rational soul you shall meet with, sprung of Adam, go preach the gospel to them; that is, tell them in the name of a God of grace this good news, that God's throne is now accessible, and every one who has a mind may come to it for grace and mercy to help in time of need.

2. The command of God enjoining you to come to a throne

of grace is unto all: 1 John iii. 23: "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ;" which is all one with coming to a throne of grace. The law of believing extends to all mankind that hear this gospel. And remember that, for disobedience to this law, you are "condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on you."

3. As the command of believing is to all, so the promise of welcome to a throne of grace is to all and every one, for their encouragement to come. "Him that cometh to me," says Christ, "I will in no wise cast out. Whosoever believeth, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Do not think that the promise in the exhibition belongs only to the elect, or to believers: no, no; "the promise is unto you, and to your seed, and to all that are afar off." Thus, I say, all that live under the joyful sound of the gospel are called to come to a throne of grace.

Quest. 3. You bid us come to a throne of grace; but where is it? we do not know where to find it. I answer, Wherever you have access to God in any of the duties of his worship, there you may find the throne of grace. Indeed, under the Old Testament, when the centre of worship was confined to the temple of Jerusalem, the poor gentiles were at a loss where to come to a throne of grace; but now, under the New Testament, the centre of worship is removed from them, and placed among us Gentiles; so that whatever part of the earth you be upon, if the heavens be above your head, you need not be at a loss where to find a throne of grace: though you were shut up in a prison or dungeon, though you were driven to the utmost part of the earth, from friend, kin and ally, yet you cannot be driven away from a throne of grace. In a word, there is no place on this side of hell but you may find this throne, a God in Christ being a God every where present; "he is not far from every one of us." So much seems to be intimated by Christ to the woman of Samaria, John iv. 21—23: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

Quest. 4. What is the way we are to take to reach this throne of grace? *Answ.* In all the world I know of no way but one, and that is Christ: John xiv. 6: "I am the way, and the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." As Christ, or God in Christ, is the throne, so he

is also the way to the throne. An incarnate Deity is the sinner's way to God, as well as God's way to the sinner: Heb. x. 19, 20: "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." The human nature of Christ assumed to the personality of the Son of God, is the portal or gate by which we enter into the throne of grace: John x. 9: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." This door of the human nature of Christ was broken into shivers by the hammer of God's wrath, that so our way might be patent to a throne of grace, to a reconciled God: hence we read of the rending of the veil of the temple from top to bottom at the death of Christ. This, then, is "the gate of God," and by it the sinner may, and the saint doth, "enter into the court" of the "great King," and "come to his seat." Some folk have a mistaken notion, as if they actually came to a throne of grace every time they give their bodily presence at the ordinances of God's appointment, such as prayer, hearing the word, communicating, or the like. I own, indeed, that these external duties are the outer gates and porches by which we come to the throne, therefore called *the gates of Zion*, especially public ordinances are intended by that denomination: but, O sirs, many a man comes to these gates that never comes to the throne; of such the Lord complains, saying, "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me." True coming or drawing near to a throne of grace, is an inward thing; it is done by an act of the heart; for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." When the heart goes into God in Christ, for grace and mercy to help in time of need, that is coming to a throne of grace. So then, I say, Christ is the only way to the throne, as he is the throne itself.

Quest. 5. After what manner should we come to this throne?

Answ. 1. If you would come aright, you would come with an empty hand. Do not bring money or price with you; for when we come to a throne of grace, we come to get, but not to give any thing to the Lord. You that make a price of your prayers, communicating, and other good deeds and qualifications, you cannot come successfully at the throne of grace.—Remember that it is a "*throne of grace*," and therefore nothing is to be gotten there in a way of debt.

2. Come with enlarged desires after what you come to ask; for "he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

3. Come with confidence, hope, and filial boldness. God would not have you to come hanging your heads, like condemned criminals coming to their judge to receive a sentence of death: no; but he would have us come to him with confidence, as children to a father, trusting in him, and looking for good things at his hand, because of his goodness, veracity, and other perfections manifested in Christ. Come, I say, with hope and expectation; for "he taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." It is a general fault among us, that we go to God in prayer, and other ordinances, as if he were niggardly of his blessings, or were unwilling to part with his grace. But, O sirs, this is not the way to succeed. Let not that man expect to receive any thing from the Lord who comes doubting and wavering, entertaining jealousies of the love and goodness of a reconciled God.

4. Come to this throne with importunity. Follow Jacob's practice, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much."

5. Make much use of the Spirit as a "Spirit of grace and supplication," that he may help your infirmities at the throne. It is he who "fills our mouths with arguments," and teaches us to pray "with groanings which cannot be uttered." And he has promised his Spirit to them that ask him.

The *last* use I make of the doctrine shall be directed to believers, who are courtiers about this throne. And all I shall say to you shall be, 1. In a word of consolation; 2. Of exhortation.

First, A word of consolation. Know then, believer, for thy comfort, that "the holy One of Israel is thy King, and in his favour thy horn shall be exalted; mercy and truth shall go before his face," with a special view to thy happiness in time and through eternity. All the grace and mercy that is in the heart of the King, is ordained for thee, and secured to thee by a well ordered covenant. The whole of his administrations, whether of grace or of providence, are calculated for thy benefit and advantage, Rom. viii. 28. You are the children of the King; he has adopted thee into his family, yea, settled an inheritance upon thee, as "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with himself." You are upon the King's secrets, and he will tell you things which he will not communicate to the rest of the world, even the secrets of his government of grace. "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others it is not given.—The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him: and he will show them his covenant." And, to crown all, there is no case thou canst be in while in the world, but thou wilt have an act of grace suited

and adapted to thy circumstances, registered in the court-book, I mean, in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, every act sealed with the blood of the King, touched with his royal sceptre; yea, thou hast the extract of it in thy hand. O what strong ground of consolation is here to you who by faith are acquainted with this throne!

A *second* word is of exhortation, or counsel to believers, who have come to this throne, in the following particulars:—

1. Be often at the King's court, especially on his court-days; I mean attend his ordinances, especially on the Sabbath, which he has sanctified and consecrated for this end.—Great men's vassals are obliged to attend them upon their court-days; and is it not reasonable, that the subjects and vassals of the King of kings should pay this respect to him? Psal. xcvi. 6—8: "Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts." O honour your King by keeping his courts: for "one day in his courts is better than a thousand; it is better to be a door-keeper in his house, than to dwell in the tents of sin:" and "those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God."

2. Let it not satisfy you to come to the court, unless you get access to the throne, and see the King's face; for it is the presence of the King that makes his courts and tabernacles amiable. Absalom was not satisfied to be at Jerusalem, unless he saw the king's face: so let it not satisfy you to attend ordinances, unless you get a visit from the God of ordinances. This was David's disposition, Psal. xxvii. 4: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." And, if you have any acquaintance with the King, whose name is *gracious*, it will bring a damp upon your spirits, when you miss his presence in his courts; you will "go mourning without the sun," crying, "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!

3. When the King calls you to court, or to come near to his throne, do not refuse his order. When, by his word, or the motions of his Spirit, he says to thy soul, "Seek ye my face," let thy soul send back a ready answer, saying, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." When he says, "Come," let thy soul return the answer, "Behold, I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God." O he takes it ill when any reject his call, as you see in the case of the spouse, Cant. v. He

comes to her, saying, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." But she indulged carnal sloth, saying, "I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" which provoked him to withdraw, till she is brought to regret her folly.

4. Beware of every thing that has a tendency to degrade you, or to make the King cast down his countenance upon you; for although he "hates putting away," yet you may provoke him to cover his face, and to turn to you the back of his throne: yea, you may provoke him to carry towards you in such a way, that the very remembrance of him will be a trouble to you. Sometimes his own dearest favourites have so grieved his Spirit, that he has carried the quarrel to the gates of hell against them; as we see in the case of David, "Thine arrows stick fast in me," says he, "and thy hand presseth me sore: this grief I have, because of my sin." You may by untenderness bring yourself to that pass, as to be made to cry, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps." And therefore beware of every thing that may be offensive to your King. Beware of pride, for "he beholds the proud afar off;" he thrusts the proud away from him, when they venture to come near his throne. Beware of unbelief, for that is what he cannot endure. How unsuitable is it for his subjects and children to call him a liar! This is a sin which turns you away from the Lord, and turns him away from you. Do not entertain jealousies of his kindness, after he has given the tokens of it to your souls; for it is a grieving of the Spirit of God to have his love-tokens called in question. Beware of untenderness: if there be not a close walking with God in the way of holiness, you need not expect to have the King's countenance; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord:" it is they that have clean hands, and a pure heart, that shall stand in his holy hill, and have a place in his tabernacle.

5. Be very observant of the King's commandments. As the acts of grace, of which I was speaking, are the measure of faith, so the law of commandments is the measure of practice. Do not think that the court of grace, or the throne of grace, gives any indulgence to a detestable licentiousness: they are indeed carnal gospellers, and Antinomians with a witness, who entertain such a notion. No; the moral law of the ten commandments is supported with the authority of the King, whose name is *gracious and merciful*. As the law, considered as a covenant of works, issues from a throne of justice; so the same law, considered as a rule of obedience, is

issued forth from a throne of grace, as is plain from the preface of the ten commandments, "I am the Lord thy God;" that is, I am unto thee a God of grace in Christ, a saving and a redeeming God: "therefore thou shalt keep all my commandments." O sirs, the law, even as a rule of duty, is supported with the best authority in heaven or earth; and "the grace of God," issuing from this throne, "teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts." Mic. vi. 8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

6. Keep company with the loyal subjects of the King, and beware of associating yourselves, or saying, "A confederacy" with rebels against the King's crown or government. "My delight," says David, "is with the saints, the excellent ones of the earth." But as for those who live in rebellion against the Lord, their company was a burden to him: "Wo is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace."

7. Be sure to pay the tribute that is due to this throne; do not withdraw from it its revenues. The King has imposed a tax of praise to be levied upon all his subjects; and "he who offereth praise, glorifieth" him. O praise is comely for the upright." "This people have I formed for myself, that they may show forth my praise." Do not withhold this revenue, but let the high praises of a God of grace be continually in your mouth. And, to engage us to a cheerful payment of this tribute of praise, let us always remember the glorious liberties and privileges which we enjoy under the auspicious government and administration of grace; which are so great and many, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive;" which made the psalmist David to express himself, as we have it, Psal. xl. 5: "Many, O Lord, my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."

8. *Lastly*, Contend for the royalties and prerogatives of this throne, which are many ways invaded at this day. Attempts are made to rob the King of his equality with the Father, while they would strip him of his independence and self-existence. Others invade his government, by appointing ceremonies in his worship, which were never ordained in his word: others, by wresting the rights of his subjects from them, particularly in the free choice and election of their pastors: others, by tolerating doctrines inconsistent with the eternal

truths of his word. Now, I say, it is incumbent on all the loyal subjects of this King, to contend for the dignities of the crown, and the liberties of his kingdom, against all that do invade the same; following the exhortation of the apostle, Gal. v. 1: Let us "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," that we "be not entangled again with any yoke of bondage."

SERMON XI.

THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH, OPENED AND APPLIED.

[BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF SEVERAL DISCOURSES ON HEB. X. 22.]

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH, &c.—HEB. X 19—22.

CHAPTER I.

Containing an Introduction to the main Purpose, with the Method of the following Discourse.

THESE verses contain the apostle's transition from the doctrinal to the practical part of the epistle. Having at great length discoursed upon the priestly office of Christ, in the foregoing part of the epistle, he sums up, in a few words, the scope and substance of all he had been saying, ver. 19—21, and then deduces a very natural inference from the whole, ver. 22: *Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.* Like a wise builder, he first digs till he comes to the foundation, and then calls himself and others to build upon it with confidence.

That we may have the more distinct view of the words, it is expedient that we observe in general, the apostle here very elegantly expresses New Testament privileges, in an Old Testament style and dialect. The highest privilege of fallen man, is to have access to the presence of God, his offended Lord and Sovereign: the only way of access is Christ, of whom the temple of Solomon was an illustrious type. And, with allusion to that typical temple, Christ is presented to our faith under a threefold view, ver. 19—21.

1. As a *gate* or *door*, by which we may enter into the *holiest*, and that with *boldness*, by virtue of his atoning blood, ver. 19. Under the Mosaic dispensation, *Aaron alone*, and not the Israelities could enter into the *holy of holies*, and that but *once a year*, with the blood of beasts sacrificed for himself and them. But now, under the New Testament, through the death and satisfaction of the Son of God, the way of access to friendship and fellowship with a holy God, both here and hereafter, is made open and patent to every sinner, who by faith comes in under the covert of the blood of Jesus. No sooner had Adam sinned, but the door of access to the majesty of God was bolted against him, and all his posterity; the cherubim with the flaming sword stood in his way. But now the flaming sword of justice being quenched in the blood of the Surety, the door of access is again wide opened. I remember, the woman of Tekoah, 2 Sam. xiv. 14, in her parabolical address to David, on Absalom's behalf, makes use of this argument with David, to persuade him to bring home his exiled Son, "God," says she, "doth devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him." This is remarkably true in the case in hand: God, in his infinite wisdom, has devised a way how his banished may be brought home again to his presence; and that is, through the blood and satisfaction of Christ, John x. 9, John xiv. 6.

2. To encourage us in our approaches to God through Christ, he is presented to us under the notion of "a new and living way, consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh," ver. 20. The inner veil, that separated between the holy place, and the holiest of all, in the temple of Jerusalem, was a type of that body of flesh assumed by the Son of God, by which his Deity was veiled; and through the breaking or rending of this by his death on the cross, the way to God and glory becomes open and patent. And this is called a "new way," either in opposition to Adam's way by a covenant of works, which is shut up ever since the fall of man; or because it never waxes old, but is ever fresh, green, and fragrant, to the believing soul. And it is called a "living way," because, though Christ was once dead, yet now he is alive, and lives for evermore, to give life to every soul that comes to God through him. And then, he is a way "consecrated for us;" he is dedicated for the use of sinners in their dealings with God: "For their sakes," says he, "do I sanctify myself." And O what can be more encouraging to a lost sinner, to make use of Christ by faith, than to know that he is just devoted for this work of saving that which was lost!

3. Whereas the sinner might object, That though the door be opened, and the new and living way consecrated; yet he

is either so ignorant, that he knows not this way; or so impotent, that he cannot walk in it; or so guilty, that he dares not venture to go into the holiest: therefore, to obviate all these, Christ is presented to us, "a great high priest over the house of God," ver. 21. What noble encouragement is here for believing! Christ, as a High Priest, "is ordained for men in things pertaining to God," Heb. v. 1. And seeing he is ordained for men, may not men make use of his mediation with confidence and boldness? Heb. iv. 14, 16. And then, by his office, he is obliged to execute the duties of his office toward every soul that employs him in it: he is obliged, as a High Priest, to instruct the ignorant, to strengthen the weak, to confirm the feeble, and "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." And, therefore, let us take courage to employ and improve him, especially considering that he is both "a merciful and faithful High Priest," Heb. ii. 17; and also a "High Priest" who is "over the house of God;" that is, he has full power and authority from his eternal Father, to negotiate our affairs, and to render both our persons and performances acceptable to him. In a word, the whole management of the "offspring and issue," and of all the "vessels of cups and flagons," is committed to him; yea, "all the glory of his Father's house hangs upon him, as upon a nail fastened in a sure place," Is. xxii. 24. And, therefore, "seeing we having a High Priest," of such authority and interest, "let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," Heb. iv. 14, 16. Whenever we have any business with God, whenever we would enter into the secret of his presence, or enjoy fellowship with him, let us go in at the back of our great High Priest, who has led the way before us, and is appearing in the presence of God for us.

Now, I say, the apostle having thus presented Christ under the most encouraging views, as the object of our faith, trust, and confidence in our dealings with the majesty of God, proceeds to recommend and inculcate a correspondent duty in the words of my text, ver. 22. *Let us draw near with a true heart, in* FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH, *having our hearts sprinkled, &c.*

Before we proceed to the more particular consideration of the words, it is very much worthy of our notice, to observe the apostle's order and method of doctrine, and how he knits the believer's privilege and duty together. He would have the privilege first believed, and then the duty performed: he would have us first believe, that "the door of the holiest is opened by the blood of Jesus," that there is "a new and living way consecrated for us," that "we have a High Priest over

the house of God," ready to introduce us into his presence; and, upon these grounds of faith, he presses and inculcates the duty, "Let us draw near," &c. It is pleasant hence to observe, how the method and order of the covenant of works is just inverted in the covenant of grace. In the covenant of works, duty was the foundation of our privilege; man was first to perform duty, and upon his doing of that, might expect the privilege in a way of pactional debt. But now, I say, the very reverse of this is God's order and method in the covenant of grace; for here we are first to believe the privilege, or to receive it as a grant of sovereign grace, and upon that ground we are to go on to duty. This is a thing that needs to be adverted to with the utmost attention, in regard the very bent of nature runs in the way of the covenant of works, namely, to expect the privilege on the score of duty; and to fancy that God is a debtor to us, when we have done this and the other duty required in the law: whereas the stream of nature runs quite cross to the order and method laid in the covenant of grace, namely, first to receive the privilege in a way of grace, like beggars receiving God's alms; and then to perform duty, as a testimony of gratitude for the privilege received, without expecting any thing from the Lord upon the account of duty done by us. This is what proud nature spurns against with the utmost reluctance. What! To take all freely, "without money, and without price," and to reckon ourselves unprofitable servants when we have done all, is what depraved nature cannot yield to, till the heart be new-moulded by sovereign and efficacious grace. "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" &c. "Wherefore have we fasted," and prayed, "and thou takest no knowledge?" is expressive of our natural way of thinking. But though this way lie cross to nature, yet this is the way in which God will have sinners saved, or else they shall never share in his salvation: he will have them to receive eternal life begun here, and consummated hereafter, as "the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord," without regard to any of our doings as a foundation of our claim or title to it. Boasting must be for ever excluded, that the glory of our salvation may redound wholly to grace, which "reigns through" imputed "righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." And therefore, I say, study to rivet upon your minds the order and method laid by God in the covenant of grace, where privilege received by faith is made the foundation of duty, and not duty the foundation of our claim to the privilege. This is the scheme or order laid in our Lesser Catechism, by the Westminister Assembly; where, in an-

swer to the 3d question, we are told, that 'the scriptures principally teach,' first, 'what man is to believe concerning God, and' then, 'what duty God requires of man.' And, according to this order, we have, first, the objects of faith, and privileges of believers explained; and then, the duties of the moral law inculcated upon that ground. And if this order of doctrine be inverted, we destroy the covenant of grace, and return to a covenant of works. So much for the connexion.

I proceed to the words themselves: where we may notice, 1. The grand duty the apostle urges upon the foregoing grounds; *Let us draw near.* 2. He gives particular directions how we are to manage in our approaches to God, through the new and living way; namely: *With a true heart, in full assurance of faith,* &c.

As for the first, namely; the general duty that is pressed, *Let us draw near.* The apostle does not tell us expressly, whither, or to whom, we are to draw near; but it is plain from the whole drift of the text and context, that he invites us to draw near *to God:* not to God absolutely considered, for thus he is inaccessible by guilty sinners; but to "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." This is that *throne of grace* to which he had invited us to "come with boldness, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," chap. iv. 16. The Greek word is the very same both there and here.

It is worthy of consideration, in the manner of the apostle's exhortation, that, when he is calling others to draw near, he comprehends himself; it is not, *Do ye draw near,* but, *Let us draw near.* Ministers of the gospel, when dispensing the truths of God, must preach home to their own souls, as well as to others. Sirs, we do not deliver truths or doctrines to you, in which we ourselves have no manner of concern; no, our own souls are at the stake, and shall either perish or be saved eternally, as we receive or reject these precious truths which we deliver to you. And truly, it can never be expected, that we will apply the truths of God with any warmth or liveliness to others, unless we first make a warm application of them to our own souls: and if we do not feed upon these doctrines, and practise these duties, which we deliver to and inculcate upon you, though we preach to others, we ourselves are but "cast-aways."

The exhortation, *Draw near,* supposes our natural distance and estrangement from God: "All we, like sheep, have gone astray," says the prophet Isaiah, chap. liii. 6. When Christ would describe our apostate and lapsed state, he does it under the notion of a "prodigal going into a far country," Luke

XV. There are three things we all lost and forfeited in the first Adam, namely, the *image of God*, the *favour of God*, and *fellowship with God:* yes, so much have we lost them, that the apostle plainly tells us, that we are *alienated from the* very *life of God* in our natural state. This God intimated to Adam immediately after the fall, in that question he propounded to him, when hiding himself from his presence among the thickets of Paradise, "Adam, where art thou?" Gen. iii. 9. *Non es ubi prius eras*, as Austin, one of the ancient fathers, paraphrases it; 'Thou art not where thou wast before.' What is become of the late friendship and fellowship that was betwixt me and thee? Of a Son of God, thou art become a child of the devil; of an ally of Heaven, turned a confederate of hell. Thus, the breach and rupture is wide like the sea. Can ever parties betwixt whom there is such a natural and moral distance be brought together again? Yes; the apostle's exhortation to *draw near* plainly bears, that the offended and affronted Majesty of Heaven is accessible "by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way." It was the great plot of Heaven from eternity, to bring fallen man back again into fellowship with his Maker. Infinite wisdom, animated by infinite bowels of mercy, has found the way, and the way is CHRIST, John xiv. 6. The main intent of his incarnation, and of the whole of his mediatory work, was to "bring us to God," 1 Pet. iii. 18. To bring strangers and enemies to amity and unity, is a great and mighty work; yet this work he accomplishes and brings about by the ransom he has paid for us, and by the operation of his Spirit in us.

This *drawing near to God* does not consist in any approach to the essence of God; for, essentially considered, "he is not far from every one of us: in him we live, and move, and have our being." Neither does it lie in an external or bodily attendance upon him in the duties of his worship, "Bodily exercise profiteth little:" many draw near to God with their mouths and lips, while their hearts are far removed from him. Neither does it consist in a moral seriousness; though, alas! it is much to bring some people even that length. People may be morally serious about eternal concerns, in a legal way, like the Pharisee, who came to Christ, saying, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Yes, Heathens, and Mahometans, and Jews, may be morally serious in their own way, but they cannot be said to draw nigh to God. What is it, then, you ask, to *draw near to God?* I answer, It is an act of the heart or mind, by which the soul, under the influence of the Spirit, sweetly and irresistibly returns to a God in Christ as its only centre of rest. The poor soul, having tried Adam's way of access, and finding that door bolted by the law, justice,

and holiness of God, despairs of ever entering by it. At length the man, when he has "wearied himself in the greatness of his way," finding the door of the holiest opened by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way being discovered to him in the light of the word and Spirit, he cries out, at the sight of it, *This is the gate of God*, by this door will I enter into his presence; yea, "this is my rest, here will I dwell, for I desire and like it well." O what a sweet acquiescence of soul is there in God's device of salvation through Christ! The man cannot but applaud and approve of it, as a device every way worthy of infinite wisdom, crying out, with the apostle, "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." This, ordinarily, is the soul's exercise, both in its first and after approaches to God, in any duty of worship. There is a constant improvement of the merit and mediation of Christ in every address the man makes to the Majesty of Heaven; he, as it were, fixes himself in the clefts of the Rock of ages; he gets into the "secret places" of that blessed stair, by which we ascend to heaven; and then he shows his countenance, and lifts up his voice, in drawing near to God, by the new and living way. We, as it were, take up the propitiation which God has set forth, in the hand of faith, hold it up to God, saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant: Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed." We go quite out of ourselves, when we draw near to the holiest by the blood of Jesus; we overlook our own duties, graces, frames, attainments, grounding our hope of access and success only upon the merit and moyen of our great high priest, God having "made us accepted in the Beloved." And, in this view of things, the soul will readily express itself, as David did in the like case, saying, "I will go unto the altar of God, unto God, my exceeding joy." And if God hide his face, the soul will wait, and bode good at his hand, saying, "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him: He will command his loving kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me."—And if the Lord smile, and grant an answer of peace, he will not ascribe his success to his own faith, frame, or fervency, but to Christ alone, saying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory." Thus much for the main duty, of *drawing near*.

The apostle next proceeds to direct as to the manner of our approach. And,

First, He directs us to draw near *with a true heart*. This is "a word fitly spoken." If he had required us to draw near with a heart perfectly clean and pure, he might as well have bidden us fly without wings; but he bids us draw near with

a *true heart;* that is, with a heart truly concerned about acceptance with God, a heart truly approving of, and acquiescing in the new and living way. In short, a true heart here, is opposed to a double, doubting, distrusting, and hypocritical heart. All dissimulation is to be avoided in our dealings with him, who "trieth the hearts and reins, and whose eyes are as a flame of fire, searching Jerusalem as with candles." Psal. li. 6: "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts." Whereas the hypocrite, who "draws near with his mouth, and honours God with his lips, while his heart is far" removed from him, shall not stand in his presence. Take care then that your hearts be honestly minded toward God when you draw nigh to him. But I pass this also, and go on to that which I have principally in view; namely,

The *second* direction or advice the apostle gives, in order to our successful approach to God by the new and living way, and that is, to draw near IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH. The original word signifies to be *fully persuaded,* or *assured* of a thing; and is opposed to *wavering, doubting,* and *uncertainty.* The apostle, having laid a firm foundation of access in the preceding verses, bids us trust to it, and rest upon it, with an unshaken confidence, and certain persuasion of success. What is farther necessary by way of explication, will occur in the prosecution of the following doctrine:—

DOCT. "It is the will of God, that they who approach to him in Christ, should draw near in full assurance of faith, or with a certain persuasion, and confident expectation of success and acceptance."

The foundation of this doctrine is obvious. It is plain, the apostle here is not speaking of that assurance of grace and salvation which follows upon believing, and is the result of the soul's reflection upon the operations of the Holy Spirit within; but of an assurance lying in the very direct act of faith: for the apostle's scope here is, not to give the marks and evidences, but to present the object of faith, namely: Christ as the *door* and *way* to the *holiest,* and as a *high priest* ready to introduce us; and upon this, he exhorts to a correspondent act of believing, in drawing near to God, namely, *with full assurance of faith.*

In discoursing on this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, endeavour to speak,

I. Of *faith* in general.

II. Of the *assurance* of faith.

III. Of the *full assurance* of faith.

IV. Of the *grounds* that faith builds its assurance upon, in drawing near to God.

V. Apply the whole.

CHAPTER II.

Of FAITH *in general.*

BEFORE I go on to discourse on these heads, I shall only premise, that the practical and experimental understanding of this subject, is a matter of the highest importance and concern, in regard, as the apostle tells us expressly, Heb. xi. 6, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Without some degree of faith, we can never make a successful approach to a throne of grace. What was said of the Israelites with regard to the earthly Canaan, that "they could not enter in because of unbelief," the same may be said of the greatest part of professors under the gospel; they *cannot enter* into the holiest of fellowship with God here, or of immediate enjoyment hereafter, *because of unbelief.* And therefore, I say, the right understanding and uptaking of this subject must be of the greatest concern to them, who have any solicitude respecting their acceptance with God. This premised, I proceed to,

I. The *first* thing proposed in the method, which was, to discourse a little *on* FAITH *in general.* I shall not stand upon the different kinds of faith that are commonly mentioned, such as, an *historical*, *miraculous*, and *temporary* faith, which may be found in reprobates and temporary believers: our inquiry at present is particularly concerning *the faith of God's elect*, which is well described in our Shorter Catechism, thus:

'Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone, for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.'

For clearing of which description, I offer the few following considerations:—

1. That faith is *a saving grace.* And it is so designated, because it is "the free gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. It is not the product of free-will; such a flower never sprung out of the soil of depraved nature; no, it is one of the prime operations of the Spirit, in effectual calling, upon the souls of God's elect. It is not bestowed upon any upon the account of good dispositions or qualifications antecedent to itself; faith is the first grace, or the first act of spiritual life, and, as it were, the parent of the other graces, because it roots and ingrafts the soul in Christ, of whom alone our fruit is found. Before the implantation of faith, nothing but atheism, enmity, ignorance, and unbelief, overspreads the face of the soul, "being alienated from the *very* life of God, through the ignorance that is in us." And, therefore, faith must needs be a *grace*, or *free gift of God*, bestowed without any antecedent merit, good

disposition, or qualification in us. Faith is a *saving* grace; because, wherever true faith is, there salvation is already begun, and shall certainly be consummated in due time. There is an inseparable connexion stated, by the ordination of Heaven, between faith and salvation: John iii. 16: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life," Mark xvi. 16: "He that believeth, shall be saved." When we preach the everlasting gospel, making offer of Christ and his salvation to every creature, we are at the same time to declare, that whosoever he be that gives faith's entertainment to this gospel of the grace of God, shall be saved. So that this promise, establishing the connexion between faith and salvation, is as extensive as the offer of the gospel, and is not made to believers exclusively of others. It is certainly true of every son of Adam, lying within the joyful sound of a Saviour, that if he believe, he shall be saved. And this we are allowed to declare in the name of God, as an encouragement to every sinner to receive and entertain our message.

2. I remark from this description of faith, that it has Christ for its main and principal object; for it is a faith *in Jesus Christ*. There is such a suitableness betwixt Christ and faith, that they cannot be separated. Take away Christ from faith, then faith is but a cipher, and stands for nothing; nothing can fill the eye or hand of faith, but Christ only, Christ is the *bread of life*, faith is the *mouth* of the soul that eats and feeds upon him: Christ is the mystical *brazen serpent*, faith the *eye* of the soul that looks to him for healing: Christ is the *strong hold* cast open to the *prisoners of hope*, faith the *foot* of the soul that runs in to him for shelter: Christ is our living *altar*, his satisfaction and intercession like the two horns of the altar, and faith *flees* in thither for safety from the law and justice of God, which pursue the sinner for his life: Christ is the *bridegroom*, and faith, like the *bride*, takes him by the hand, saying, *Even so I take him.* In a word, faith slights and overlooks every thing else to be at Christ, saying with David, Psal. lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee;" and, with Paul, "I desire to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord."

3. I remark, that faith is here described to be *a receiving of Christ*, according to what we have, John i. 12: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," &c. For understanding this, you should know, that Christ, the ever-blessed object of faith, is presented to us

in the gospel under a great many different views and aspects, in a correspondence to which faith receives its denomination. For instance, Is Christ presented under the notion of *meat* to the hungry soul? then faith is expressed by *eating*. Is Christ held out under the notion of *living waters?* then faith is called a *drinking*. Is he held out as a *refuge?* then faith is called a *fleeing* to him, Heb. vi. 18. Is he held out as a *garment* to the naked? then faith is a *putting him on* for clothing. Thus, I say, according to the aspect in which Christ is presented, faith receives its name; as the sea receives its names according to the different countries or shores it washes. Just so here, when Christ is presented under the notion of a *gift*, then faith is called a *receiving* him; for giving and receiving are correlates, as you see, John iii. 27: "A man can receive," (or as in the margin, *take unto himself*,) "nothing, except it be given him from heaven."* Receiving, or taking of a thing, is but stealth or robbery, where it is not warranted by an antecedent giving or granting: so our receiving Christ would be but presumption, and a vicious intromission, if he were not given of God to be received. And this giving of Christ in the revelation and offer of the gospel, is common to all, and warrants all to receive him. John vi. 32. Christ says to a promiscuous multitude, the far greater part of whom were unbelievers, as is evident from Christ's character of them, "My Father," (says he,) "giveth you the true bread from heaven," meaning himself. We read, Psal. cxv. 16, that "God hath given the earth to the sons of men;" that is, he made a grant of it to them, to be used and possessed by them; and by virtue of this deed of gift or grant, before the earth came to be fully peopled, or stocked with inhabitants, it was lawful for a man to take possession of it, and use it as his own. Just so here, *God* has *so loved the world* of lost mankind, *that he* has *given his only begotten Son, that whosoever* of lost mankind *believeth in him*, or receives him, *should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. This will not infer a *universal redemption:* for I do not now speak of the purchase or application of redemption, which, without all doubt, is peculiar to the elect: but of that giving of Christ in the world, which warrants our receiving of him. And this, past all peradventure, is common to the whole visible church, yea, to all to whom the revelation of Christ comes; for if there were not such a giving of Christ as warrants all to receive him, the unbelieving world could not in justice be condemned for rejecting him. O then *let mount Zion rejoice* and *let the daughters of Judah*, (I mean the visible church,) *be glad*, and

* When Christ is received by us, he must be tendered, given, granted, or communicated unto us. *Owen on the Glory of Christ*, p. 123.

receive it as *a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation*, that "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of peace:" for these are "good tidings of great joy to all people," Is. ix. 6, Luke ii. 10. Receive this Saviour who is given to you; and receive him with gratitude and praise, warbling out that doxology with heart and lip, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." And if you do not, remember I tell you, you will follow after lying vanities, and slight your own mercy.

4. Upon this description of faith, I remark, that faith is called not only a receiving, but a *resting* upon Christ: Psal. xxxvii. 7: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." We are not, in my opinion, to think, that receiving is one act of faith, and resting another act of it; they are only different expressions of the same applicatory, justifying faith, or (as some will have it) the rest of faith is a continuation of the reception. There are a great many denominations of faith, of the same divine authority with these two mentioned in the answer of the Catechism, such as, eating, drinking, fleeing, entering, coming, trusting, &c. But these are not different acts, but only different expressions of the saving act of faith, making use of, or applying Christ in a suitableness to the view in which he is presented in the word of God. Now, as to this expression of *resting*, it leads us to conceive of Christ as a *rock* or a strong *foundation*, upon which we may, and still ought to lay the weight of our everlasting concerns, with the greatest confidence. When we lay our weight upon a rock, we are not afraid that the rock will sink or fail underneath us; so, in believing, the poor, weary, burdened soul, finding itself unable to stand upon its own legs, leans and rests upon this Rock of ages, being confident that this Rock will not fail. Or, the expression of *resting* may allude to a man's resting upon a charter for an estate, a bond or bill for a sum of money; he rests upon it as good and sufficient security: so the soul, in believing, rests upon the fidelity and veracity of a God in Christ, pawned in the covenant of grace, and the promises thereof. He looks upon the fulness of grace and truth, of merit and spirit treasured up in Christ, as they are laid out in the word of faith, saying, with David, "This is all my salvation, and all my desire." On which account, faith, Heb. xi. 1, is called "the substance of things hoped for;" because it rejoices in the promise, as though it had the thing promised. This *resting* is equivalent to *trusting*, as is evident from all these scriptures cited in the Catechism upon this head. I shall notice farther, before I leave this point, that both these expressions of *receiving* and *resting*, by which faith is here described, do, in the very nature of the thing intended,

carry an application and appropriation in them: for when I receive a gift, I take it as my own property; and when I rest upon a charter or bond, I rest on it as my security: and if this be not allowed, the relieving and supporting nature of faith is in a great measure lost; without it we could never be "filled with joy and peace in believing." I shall only add, that both these expressions, pointing out the nature of faith, so describe it, as to put it out of the rank or category of *works*; for when a poor man receives his alms, or when a weary man rests himself, he cannot in any propriety of speech be said to *work*. God will have man saved, under the new covenant, by such a mean instrument, that so works and boasting may be for ever excluded, and grace alone for ever exalted.

5. I remark, that faith receives Christ, and rests *upon him alone*. The poor soul, before the saving revelation of Christ, was grasping at empty shadows, trusting in lying refuges; and, like the men of the old world, when the waters of the deluge were upon the increase, was running to this and the other mountain, where he might be safe from the swelling deluge of God's wrath; but finding the waters to overflow his hiding-places, he quits them, and flees to the Rock of ages, saying, "In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: in the Lord only is the salvation of his people.—There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby to be saved, but the name of Jesus." Every man by nature being married to the law in Adam, is attempting to climb up to heaven upon the broken ladder of the covenant of works, and to pass the deluge of God's wrath by the fallen bridge of the law. But as sure as the Lord lives, your attempts this way will fail you; for "by the works of the law, no flesh living shall be justified." God has established a bridge of communication between heaven and earth, by the obedience, death, and intercession of his eternal Son; and every other passage to heaven but this, is stopped by the justice and holiness of God. John xiv. 6, says Christ there, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

6. Faith receives Christ, and rests upon him alone *for salvation*. This points at the end the sinner has before him, in his first closing with Christ; he flees to him for salvation; Acts xv. 11: "We believe, that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved." By *salvation* here, we are not simply to understand an eternity of happiness in the enjoyment of God after time, but a salvation begun in this present life; salvation from the beginning of it in regeneration, till it be consummated in glory. The soul, in believing, rests upon Christ for pardon, which is salvation from the guilt of sin, and the condemnatory sentence of the law:

it rests on him for sanctification, which is a salvation from the filth and power of sin; for glorification, which is a salvation from the very in-being of sin. Alas! the greatest part of the visible church have no other notion of Christ, but only as a Saviour to keep them out of hell, and to deliver them from vindictive wrath. It is true, indeed, our Jesus saves from "the wrath that is to come." But how does he that? He does it by saving from sin in the first place: "His name," says the angel, "shall be called Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." His first and great business was to *condemn sin*, that arch-traitor, and first-born of the devil, Rom. viii. 3, "to finish transgression, and make an end of sin." And therefore it is a salvation from sin, in the guilt, and filth, and power of it, for which faith receives Christ, and rests upon him.

7. I remark, that faith receives and rests upon Christ, "as he is offered to us in the gospel. This *offer* of Christ, though it be last named in this description of faith, yet it is the first thing, in the order of nature, that faith believes: for unless one believe that Christ is offered to him in particular, as the gift of God, and as a foundation of hope and help, he will never receive him, or rest on him for salvation. This is a believing in order to believing; a believing that Christ, and salvation in him, is really offered, in order to his being accepted and received. And therefore be verily persuaded, that Christ is *yours* in the *offer*, and "that God hath given to you eternal life in his Son;" for "this is the record of God," 1 John v. 11. And unless you believe this, you "make God a liar, because you believe not the record that God hath given of his Son," ver. 10. O sirs, believe it, that "unto you a child is born, unto you a son is given, whose name is called Wonderful," &c.; and that God hath given him to a lost world, in the gospel offer and revelation, that "whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16.

Next, you may observe, that it is *in the gospel* that this offer is made, and this gift of God is presented to you. What is the gospel, but a word of grace, a word of promise, a word of faith, a word of life and salvation? and "to you is the word of this salvation sent." And in this word, Christ and his everlasting righteousness, and all-sufficient fulness, is brought near to you, in order to your receiving and applying him to your own souls by faith. You need not climb up to heaven, or dig into hell, in quest of a Saviour; for "the word is nigh thee," and Christ in the word; "even the word of faith which we preach," Rom. x. 6—9. As a sum of money is brought nigh to a man in a bond that is offered him, so is Christ brought nigh in the word of promise to us, Acts ii, 39: "The promise is unto you," &c. And without this

word of grace and promise, believing were a thing impossible, because faith could never fasten on Christ, or on God in him, without this word of faith. If I should bid you believe that such a man will give you a sum of money, you would think me ridiculous, unless he had given his word that he would do it; your faith or trust could not fasten upon him without his word or writ as the immediate ground of it: so here, our faith, trust, or confidence, could never find a foundation without God's word of grace and promise; and in receiving his word, you receive himself, and all the treasures of his grace laid up in Christ, and laid out to your hand in the word.

Next, it is worthy of consideration in this branch of the description, that faith's reception and application of Christ must be regulated by, and bear a proportion to the offer that is made of him in the gospel; for here we are told, that faith is a receiving and resting upon him *as* he is offered, &c. This qualifies our reception of Christ, and distinguishes the faith of true believers, from that of hypocrites and formalists. And therefore notice this as a thing of the last moment and consequence, whether your faith comes up to the offer, and corresponds to it. I shall illustrate this in the four following particulars.

1*st*, Christ is *freely* offered in the gospel: Is. lv. 1: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." Rev. xxii. 17: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." So faith receives and embraces him as the *free* gift of God. Beware of thinking to buy the pearl with the money and price of your works, duties, and good qualifications; as if by these you were fitted for receiving Christ, or as if God made you the more welcome; on account of these, to receive his unspeakable gift. No, no, remember that, in the matter of believing, you are to shake your hands from holding of such bribes; for "the pearl of great price" cannot be bought in such a way. It is true, believing is called a *buying*, Is. lv. 1; Rev. iii. 18. But then let it be remembered what sort of a buying it is, it is a buying *without money, and without price.* God's price in the market of the gospel is just *nothing:* and yet this is so great a matter with man, that the pride of his heart will not allow him to tell it down. We cannot think of coming up, I should rather say, cannot think of coming down to God's price; I mean, of taking Christ and salvation in him and through him for nothing. Many say to God as Abram said to the king of Sodom, Gen. xiv. 23: "I will not take any thing that is thine, from a thread even to a shoelatchet, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." Just so does the proud self-righteous sinner upon the matter

say to God. God comes in a gospel-dispensation, saying, 'Come, sinners, I see you are "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked:" you have nothing to give me as an equivalent for life, righteousness, and salvation; and therefore I seek no money or price from you, but make a free gift of my Son, and his whole fulness, for nothing; only take him as my free gift, and he and all that comes along with him is your own for ever.' 'No, says the pride of the heart, '"I am rich, and increased with goods, I stand in need of nothing" at God's hand: if God will give me life upon the terms of the first covenant, as it was granted to Adam; or if (because I am already a sinner, and incapable of yielding a perfect and sinless obedience) God will lower the terms of the covenant of works, and grant me an interest in Christ and salvation for my act of believing, or on the score of my honest aims and good meanings, or sincere endeavours, I am well contented.' But to take Christ and eternal life for nothing is what the proud legal heart cannot stoop to. O what a cursed aversion is there in the heart of man against his being a debtor to grace, and grace only! To "buy without money, and without price," is a mystery which the selfish heart of man cannot comprehend. But, sirs, faith is a grace that comes to get, and not to give: or if it give any thing, it is the ills of the soul; but nothing of good does it pretend to give. The sinner, in believing, upon the matter says, 'Lord, I give thee my *folly*, and take thee for my only *wisdom*: I give thee my *guilt*, that thou mayest be *the Lord my righteousness*; I give thee my *defilements*, and take thee for *sanctification*; I give thee my *chains* and *fetters*, that I may be indebted to thee for *redemption* and *liberty*; I give thee my *poverty*, and take thee for my only *riches*; I give thee my *wicked*, *wandering*, *hard*, and *deceitful heart*, that thou mayest give me the *new heart* and *new spirit* promised in thy covenant.' Thus, I say, Christ is *freely* offered, and must be *freely* received.

2*dly*, Christ is offered *wholly*, an undivided Christ is offered, and thus also he must be received. There are some who, in their professed and pretended way of believing, do as it were halve and divide Christ. Some so far receive him as a *prophet*, that they submit to the teaching of his word, and thus come to acquire a great deal of speculative knowledge in the things of God; but, being unacquainted with the teaching of his Spirit, they never come to the knowledge of the truth "as it is in Jesus." And hence it comes that they never flee to him as a propitiation, or submit to his authority as a King and a Lawgiver: for the execution of the prophetical office, paves the way for his reception both as a Priest and King. Some, again, profess to receive Christ as a *Priest*, to save them from hell and the curse; but, by continuing in their

ignorance under a gospel-revelation, and walking according to the course of this world," and not according to the laws of Christ, they evidently reject him, both as a Prophet and King. Others, again, and I fear too many in our day, professedly receive Christ as a *King* and *Lawgiver*, to the prejudice of his priestly office, while they imagine, by their obedience to his law, particularly the *new gospel-law* of faith and repentance (as some call it,) to purchase a title to salvation: by which means they either totally exclude the righteousness of Christ, or mingle in their own acts of faith and repentance with the righteousness of Christ, in the affair of acceptance and justification before God: in both which cases, "Christ can profit them nothing; they are fallen from grace," as the apostle expressly declares, Gal. v. 2, 4. Thus, I say, many pretended believers halve and divide the offices of Christ. But *is Christ divided?* No; a whole, an entire and undivided Christ must be received, or no Christ at all; there is nothing of Christ that a believing soul can want. It is true, indeed, the first flight of a poor awakened soul, fleeing from the face of the law and justice of God, is to Christ as a *Priest;* because here, and here only, he finds relief and shelter under the covert of everlasting righteousness. But at the same moment in which he receives him as a Priest, for justification, he submits to his kingly authority, saying, as the men of Israel did to Gideon, "Rule thou over us:—for thou hast delivered us out of the hands of our enemies. O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we now make mention of thy name."

3dly, Christ is offered *particularly* to every one of the hearers of the gospel; and, accordingly, faith receives him with *particular* application. The general call and offer reaches every individual person; and God speaks to every sinner as particularly as though he named him by his name and surname: "Remission of sin is preached to *you;* we beseech *you* to be reconciled; "the promise is unto *you*." And, for my part, I do not know what sort of a gospel men make, who do not admit this. Now I say, faith, which is the echo of the gospel offer and call, must needs receive an offered Christ and salvation, with particular application to the soul itself. For a person to rest in a general persuasion that Christ is offered to the church, or offered to the elect, or a persuasion of God's ability and readiness to save all that come to Christ, is still but a general faith, and what devils, reprobates, and hypocrites may have. Man, woman, Christ stands at thy door, thou in particular, even thou, art called and commanded to believe in the name of the Son of God. Here lies the great pinch and strait of believing: the convinced and awakened soul, through the policy of Satan, and the workings of a de-

ceitful heart, thrusts away the word of grace and faith, as not pertaining to it; till God, by the power of his Spirit, irradiate the word, and irradiate the mind of the sinner; thus letting the man see that to *him* the word of this salvation is sent: and then he believes with particular application, not only good-will to man upon earth, but good-will to *me*. Christ is offered to *me*, and therefore I take him for *my own* Saviour; the promise and covenant is directed to *me*, and therefore I embrace it as *my* security. But, perhaps, more of this under the second general head.

4thly, God is *hearty* and *in good earnest*, in his offers of Christ, and his salvation. O sirs! do not think that a God of truth dissembles with you, when he makes offer of his unspeakable gift, or that he offers a thing to you which he has no mind to give. He says, yea, he swears with the greatest solemnity, by his very life, that he is in good earnest, and has no pleasure in your death. And after this, to think that he is not in earnest, what else is it, but to charge a God of truth with lying and perjury? There cannot be a greater affront offered to a man of common veracity. How criminal then must it be to impute such a thing to him, for whom "it is impossible to lie," and who hates all fraud and dissimulation in others "with a perfect hatred?" Thus, I say, God is in good earnest in his offers of Christ; so faith is hearty, and in good earnest in receiving and applying him: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." God's whole heart and his whole soul is in the offer and promise of the gospel, Jer. xxxii. 41; and is it not reasonable that we should give him a meeting, by believing with the whole heart and soul? It is not one faculty, but all the powers of the soul do jointly concur in this business of believing; though, indeed, to speak accurately, with the learned and judicious Dr. Owen, 'Faith is in the understanding in respect of its being and subsistence, in the will and heart, in respect of its effectual operation.' This much shall serve for the *first* thing proposed, namely, some account of the nature of *faith* in general.

CHAPTER III.

Of the Assurance *of Faith.*

II. The *second* thing in the method was to speak a little *of the* assurance *of faith*. What I have to offer upon this head, I shall endeavour to reduce under the five following propositions:—

Proposition 1, Is this,—That in this faith (which I have been describing) there is a twofold certainty or assurance, namely,

of *assent* and *application*. The former necessarily supposes as assurance of understanding, or of knowledge, Col. ii. 2. The apostle there speaks of *the full assurance of understanding*, which every Christian ought to breathe after, and which every believer has in a greater or less measure; for it is only "they that know his name that will put their trust in him," Psal. ix. 10. This assurance of understanding, as I take it, lies in an uptaking of the reality and excellency of things divine and supernatural: there is a beam of the glorious Sun of righteousness darted in upon the man's soul, who before was "sitting in darkness, and in the regions of the shadow of death;" by which he that was once *darkness* in the abstract, becomes *light in the Lord*. He comes now to see things spiritual in another light than formerly; he enters, as it were, into a new world of wonders, upon which account we are said to be "called out of darkness into God's marvellous light." Perhaps the man had, before this, some dreaming, floating, superficial notions of these things; he heard of them by the hearing of the ear; but now his eyes see them: and he sees as great a reality in things invisible and eternal, as though he saw them with his bodily eyes. This is called by the apostle, Heb. xi. 1, "the evidence of things not seen." There is such a certainty here, as amounts to a demonstration; so that you may as soon persuade a man that it is midnight, when the midday sun is shining upon him in full splendour, as persuade a man in the lively exercise of faith, that there is not a reality and excellency in things supernaturally revealed. This is so essential to faith, that very commonly under the Old Testament, and frequently also under the New, faith receives its denomination from it. Is. liii. 11; Jer. xxxi. 34; John xvii. 3.

But, to come a little more close to the purpose in hand, 1*st*, There is, I say, in faith an assurance of *assent*, by which the man assuredly believes whatever God has said in his word to be true; and that not upon the testimony of men, of ministers, or angels, but upon the testimony and authority of the God of truth, for whom it is impossible to lie, speaking in his own word, and saying, *Thus saith the Lord*. But in a particular manner the soul gives its assent to the truth of the gospel, and the revelation of the word, concerning the person, natures, offices, undertakings, and performances of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer, Surety, and Saviour of lost sinners. The man's understanding being enlightened with the knowledge of Christ, and having gotten a view of him by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, he finds it to be all true that God has said of Christ in the word; so that he cannot shun in this case to join issue with the apostle, "This is indeed a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15. He sees the truth and veracity of God

so much engaged in the covenant and promises thereof, that they are more firm than the everlasting mountains and perpetual hills, Is. liv. 10. Now, this certainty of assent is, in scripture-dialect, called a "believing the report of the gospel," Is. liii. 1; a "receiving the record of God," 1 John v. 10, 11; a "setting to the seal, that God is true," John iii. 33.

2*dly*, There is in faith an assurance of *application*, or *appropriation*, expressed frequently in scripture by *resting*, *trusting* or *confiding* in the Lord, and the veracity of his word of grace and promise. By this act of faith, the soul takes home the promise, and embraces it as a good and sufficient security to itself. It is said of the Old Testament worthies, Heb. xi. 13, that they were "persuaded of the promises, and embraced them." Their faith in the promise was a persuasion, or assent with appropriation of it to their own souls, insomuch that they looked upon the promise as their substance: and hence is that which we have in the 1st verse of that chapter, *Faith is the substance of things hoped for.* This applicatory act of faith, wherein the very life, soul, and sweetness of faith lies, is pleasantly expressed and illustrated in David. God had made a promise to him of the crown and kingdom of Israel, which bore up his spirits, when, through the rage and fury of Saul, he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains; and viewing the promise, and the fidelity of the promiser, he cries out, Psal. lx. 6, "God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice:" and because I have the security of his promise I dare say it with confidence and assurance, "Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine." In like manner, true faith appropriates the mercy of God in Christ to the soul itself in particular, upon the ground of the free and faithful promise of God. I might here demonstrate, that the stream of our best Protestant divines concur in their sentiments as to this matter: I shall only at present quote the definition of faith given by the great and judicious Dr. Owen, in his Catechism, or *Principles of the Doctrine of Christ;* where, having moved the question, 'What is justifying faith?' His answer is, 'A gracious resting on the free promises of God in Christ Jesus for mercy, with a firm persuasion of heart, that God is a reconciled Father to us in the Son of his love.' For proof of which he cites, 1 Tim. i. 16: John xiii. 15: John xix. 25: Rom. iv. 5: Heb. iv. 16: Rom. viii. 38, 39: Gal. ii. 20: 2 Cor. v. 20, 21. And on the margin he has these words:—'Of this faith the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause, the word the instrumental, the law indirectly, by discovering our misery, the gospel immediately, by holding forth a Saviour. Faith,' adds he, 'is in the understanding in respect of its being and subsistence, in the will and heart in respect of its effectual working.' According to this account of faith, the assurance I speak of,

namely, a persuasion of the promise with appropriation (as the judicious Calvin speaks,) can no more be separate from faith, than light can be separate from the sun. It takes home the grace and mercy of God to the soul in particular, which before lay *in common*, in the offer of the gospel. And without this particular application, the offer and promise of the gospel can stand us in no stead; but is like a price put in the hand of a fool, who has no heart to it. Our meat set before us will never feed us, unless it be applied by eating it; so "except we eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of man," by an applying faith, *we have no life in us.* Whatever excellency there be in Gilead's balm, it will never recover the hurt of the daughter of Zion, unless it be used by faith. Faith answers and corresponds to the word of faith, as the seal and the wax answer to one another, Zech. xiii. 9: "I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." Faith will not quit its MY's, though all the world should say against it. The marrow of the gospel (as Luther observes) is in these pronouns, MEUM, NOSTRUM, *my* and *our.* He bids us read these with great emphasis. *Tolle meum*, and *tolle Deum*, says another, "Take away property, and you take away God, take away Christ." It is the common dialect of faith in scripture, to vent itself in words of appropriation; it has a peculiar pleasure and satisfaction in these words, *my* and *our*, and rolls them in its mouth like a sweet morsel. See how sweetly David harps upon this string, Psal. xviii. 1, 2. No less than eight times in a breath does he repeat his appropriating *my;* "My strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my strength, my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." Yes, so tenacious is faith in this matter, that it will maintain its *my's* in the face of a hiding and frowning God: Psal. xxii. 1: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" *My* is a word of faith, says Flavel on the text. So Is. xlix. 14: "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." But I need not stand to offer more instances of this kind, seeing, as one observes, faith in scripture expresses itself by these two words, *my* and *our*, no less than about three hundred times.

Thus, you see what kind of assurance there is in faith, namely, an assurance or certainty of *assent* and *application.* The first may be found in a great measure, and in some sort, in devils and reprobates: the last is of a distinguishing nature, and peculiar only to the faith of God's elect, and of his operation; though, indeed, some shadow of it also may be found in the presumptuous faith of hypocrites; of which we may speak afterward. Knowledge and assent are preparatory toward that application, in which the very soul of saving and justifying faith lies. And when we speak of them one after

another, it is not as if they were really separate in the soul's exercise; for I take them up as one complex undivided act of the soul. In the very first view and relation of Christ by the word and Spirit, the soul cannot shun to cry out with Thomas, *My Lord, and my God.* I do not mean that the soul always, in the first moment of believing, runs that length, as to express itself so with the mouth; but I mean, this is what faith would say, could it get up its head from under the load of unbelief and indwelling corruption, with which it is overpowered.

Proposition 2, I offer, is this,—That there is a great difference betwixt the assurance of *faith*, (which I have now described,) and the assurance of *sense*, which follows upon faith. The assurance of faith is a *direct*, but the assurance of sense is a *reflex* act of the soul. The assurance of faith has its object and foundation from *without*, but that of sense has them *within*. The object of the assurance of faith is a *Christ revealed, promised, and offered in the word;* the object of the assurance of sense is a *Christ formed within us by the Holy Spirit.* The assurance of faith is the *cause*, that of sense is the *effect;* the first is the *root*, and the other is the *fruit.* The assurance of faith eyes the promise in its *stability*, flowing from the *veracity* of the promises; the assurance of sense views the promise in its *actual accomplishment.* By the assurance of faith, Abraham believed that he should have a son in his old age, because God who cannot lie had promised; but by the assurance of sense, he believed it when he got Isaac in his arms. By the first, Noah was sure that he and his family should not perish in the waters of the deluge; but by the last, he was assured of it, when the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat, and the waters were withdrawn again into their proper channels. By the former, the believing Israelites were assured, that Canaan should be their possession, because God had made a grant and a deed of gift of it to them in his promise; by the latter they were assured of it, when they passed Jordan, overthrew the old inhabitants, and divided the good land by lot, as the inheritance of the tribes of Israel. Time would fail me, to illustrate this matter by instances that stand upon record in the sacred oracles. Faith asserts its interest in a *future* good, because *promised;* sense asserts its interest in a *present* good, because *possessed.* Faith says, *My God will hear me;* sense says, "My God hath heard me." Faith says, "He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness;" sense says, "He hath brought me forth to the light, and I do behold his righteousness." Again; faith is conversant about things that are *not seen*, and *hoped for;* sense is conversant about things *seen*, and *actually enjoyed.* Faith says, "He is

my God, because he has said in the covenant, *I will be their God;*" sense again says, "He is *my God*, because *I know* my soul has said unto the Lord, *He is my Lord.*" Faith assures the soul of the remission of sins in the blood of the Lamb, because God has said, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more;" sense, again, assures the soul of remission, because of the *intimations* of pardon in some *sensible* smiles of the Lord's countenance, and some saving operations of his grace. By faith I believe my salvation, because it is *purchased*, *promised*, and *possessed* by my glorious head Christ Jesus: but by sense I believe my salvation, because *I find* this salvation already *begun* in a work of regeneration, and *advancing* in a work of sanctification, "being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun the good work, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Proposition 3. The assurance of faith will stand its ground, when the assurance of sense is quite lost and gone. A clear instance of this we have in Christ, when there was a total eclipse of sensible manifestations, yea, nothing, but a lowering cloud of vindictive wrath surrounding and breaking upon him as our Surety; yet, at that same time, the assurance of faith maintains the claim, and repeats it, saying, *My God, my God;* upon the ground not only of his eternal Sonship, but of the promise the Father had made to him, Psal. lxxxix. 26: "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation." And lest you should think this was a thing peculiar to the *Head*, see an instance of it also in the *church*, which is his body, Is. xlix. 14: "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Upon which the holy Rutherford sweetly glosses to this purpose: 'He may be a forgetting and withdrawing God to my feeling; and yet to my faith, MY GOD, and MY LORD: even as the wife may believe the angry and forsaking husband is still her husband.' Heman, Psal. lxxxviii. is so far deserted as to sensible presence, that he is, as to his own feeling, "laid in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps," ver. 6. He even adds, ver. 7: "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me; and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves." And, ver. 15—17: "While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. They came round about me daily like water, they compassed me about together. How much lower could a child of God be brought, on this side of hell? and yet faith, amidst all these clouds, steps in, with its appropriating *my*, ver. 1: "O Lord God of my salvation." And, truly, if there were not some exhilarating certainty in faith, acting upon the unalterable covenant, in such cloudy and dismal dispensations, I know

not what could keep the believer from running into utter despair. But the grace of faith will venture the soul's safety upon the strong plank of the promise, even when sensible consolations are quite dashed to pieces, by the angry billows of outward and inward trouble, like two seas, meeting upon the believer. David had the experience of this, Psal. xxvii. 13: "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Hence also it is, that the Lord directs his people to the exercise of faith in such a case, Is. l. 10: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

Proposition 4. When we speak of the assurance of faith, it is not to be so understood, as if every one that has faith were perfectly free of *doubting*. This, I apprehend, is what scares many at this doctrine of the assurance of faith. They think, that if there be an assurance in the essence of faith, then it would follow, that every true believer behooved always to have such assurance as to be free of *doubting*; which is contrary to the experience of the generation of the righteous. But this objection goes upon a palpable mistake, as if faith and a believer were one and the same thing. We do indeed assert, that there is no doubting in faith; for faith and doubting are commonly in scripture directly opposed one to another: but though there be no doubting in faith, yet there is much doubting in the believer, by reason of prevailing unbelief and indwelling sin. If it were true that *assurance* is not of the nature of faith, because the believer is not always assured; by the same way of reasoning it would follow that *resting* is not of the nature of faith, because the believer is not always actually staying and resting himself on the Lord; or that *trusting* is not of the nature of faith, because the believer is not always trusting. It may be as well argued, that seeing is not of the nature of the eye, because sometimes the eyelids are closed; or that heat is not of the nature of fire, because its heat is not perceptible by reason of the ashes with which it is covered; or that light is not of the nature of the sun, because sometimes it is eclipsed by the interposing moon. Remove the ashes, and the heat of the fire will appear; remove interposing bodies, and the sun will have light; open the eye-lids, and the eye will see: so do but remove ignorance, unbelief, and other incumbrances of corruption from faith, and see what the nature of it is then. For it is of the *nature of faith* in the abstract, that the present question is, and not what lodges in the *believer* who hath faith. In the believer there is, *as it were, the company of two armies*, grace and corruption, love and enmity, repentance and impenitence,

faith and unbelief: but these are not to be confounded together, because they are in the same subject. We must not exclude complacency and delight in the Lord out of the nature of love, because, through remaining enmity and corruption, his love is so overpowered, that he cannot perceive any such thing in him, but rather the reverse of love. The same may be said of other graces. So here we must not conclude, that there is nothing of this applicatory assurance in faith, because of prevailing unbelief, and doubts flowing from it.

Proposition 5, is this,—That as there is a great difference betwixt the *my* of faith, and the *my* of sense; so there is yet a far greater difference between the *my* of *faith* (or of true sense flowing from it,) and the *my* of *presumption*. Presumptuous confidence has its *my's*, as well as faith and well-grounded experience; as we see plainly in the case of Balaam, Numb. xxii. 18: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God." Now, say you, since a presumptuous confidence may speak in the dialect of true faith and experience, in what lies the difference? This is a very material and momentous question; and, with a dependence on "the Father of lights," I shall attempt a solution of it in the few following particulars:—

1*st*, The assurance of faith receives and applies Christ to the soul in particular, as he lies in the *revelation* and *grant* that is made of him to sinners in the *word*, which is the immediate *ground* of faith; whereas, presumptuous confidence, though it claims an interest in him, yet does it not upon this bottom, or in God's method and way of conveyance. The apostle tells us, Rom. x. 8, that Christ, and his righteousness and salvation, are brought nigh unto us *in the word of faith*. What is the design of the covenant of grace, and of these declarations, offers, and promises of grace, that are made to us in the glorious gospel, but just to bring Christ so near to us, as we by believing may come to apply him and his whole fulness to our own souls? John xx. 31: "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." If we would find Christ, and eternal life in him, we need not *ascend into heaven*, or *descend into hell*, in search for him, as the apostle speaks, Rom. x. 6, 7. But we are to search for him in the "scriptures, for they are they which testify of him." Christ is brought near to us in the *testimony* or *record* of God in the word, where "he gives us eternal life, in his Son Christ Jesus," 1 John v. 11. Now, faith, in its direct act, I say, takes Christ, and claims him upon this grant and gift that is made of him in the word of grace; and upon no other foundation will it adventure to assert its interest in

him. Like an honest man, who will not intermeddle with goods, money, or the estate of another, unless he have a charter, bond, testament, promise, or some such security, upon which he may do it warrantably, without vicious intromission: whereas the thief or robber puts to his hand, without looking after any such warrant; if he gets what he has a mind for any how, he is easy.* Here lies a fatal flaw in the faith of many hearers of the gospel: they grasp at Christ and his salvation, but they overleap the *gift* and *grant* of him in the word, as the immediate foundation of their faith. If we consult the experience of the saints in scripture, we shall find their faith terminating immediately upon the word: "In his word do I hope," says David. "Remember the word upon which thou hast caused me to hope. I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." Their faith came by hearing or reading the word. This is the chariot in which the Lord rides, when he presents himself to us as the object of our faith and trust: and therefore that faith which overlooks the promise and offer of the gospel, is but a presumptuous faith. "Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine," says David, in that forecited lxth psalm, because "God hath spoken in his holiness." So, says an applying faith, 'Pardon is mine, peace is mine, grace is mine, glory is mine in Christ, yea, God himself is *my God;* because God hath made over himself, and all these things in Christ to me, in the covenant of promise, or testament of my elder Brother, sealed and confirmed by his blood.' But, say you, may not a presumptuous hypocrite pretend to found his faith upon the promise, and claim an interest in him, even upon that ground? An answer to this leads me to a

2*d* Difference between the *my* of faith, and the *my* of presumptuous confidence, namely, this, That though the presumptuous person may run away with the promise, yet he does not embrace the promise *as it is in Jesus*, or *as Jesus is in it.* This is a mystery which only can be explained to purpose by Him who "openeth the book, and looses the seven seals thereof." The view I have of it, you may take up as follows. The covenant, and all the promises of it, are made to Christ as the first heir, both by birth and purchase: he is God's *first-born*, and therefore the *heir* of the inheritance of eternal life. But besides, as the *second Adam*, by his obedience and death, having fulfilled the law, and satisfied justice; the promise of life, which was forfeited by the sin and disobedience of the *first Adam*, comes to be settled upon him, and his seed in him. Now, matters standing thus, the soul, in applying the promise, takes its title to it, not upon the ground of

* See Durham on Is. liii. sermon 5, last paragraph.

any thing in itself, but comes in only upon Christ's right and title; his righteousness is the only proper, entitling, meritorious condition of the covenant, and of all the promises of it. Here lies the failure in presumptuous confidence, that the man being never beat entirely off from Adam's covenant, he is always seeking to found his title to the promise in himself, some good condition or qualification wrought in him, or done by him. Thus, many attempt to enter themselves heirs to the promises, and to eternal life, but shall never be able: Why? Because they do not by faith enter themselves heirs in Christ, or upon his right and title: and "another foundation can no man lay; for the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Thus, I say, presumptuous faith does not embrace the promise "as it is in Christ, in whom all the promises of God are yea, and in him amen." And then, I say, he does not embrace the promise *as Jesus is in it;* for as all the promises are in *Christ*, so Christ is *in all the promises.* What is it that is bequeathed in his testament, but himself and all his fulness? He was the great mercy promised to the fathers. When the covenant was promulgated unto Adam, and afterward to Abraham, what else was it, but just a promise of Christ? And when, in process of time, the covenant of grace came to be farther opened, in a variety of promises, what were they all, but Christ, and the grace that is in him, parcelled out to us, that we by faith might apply him, and the grace that is in him, according to our need? And hence it is that the believer, in applying the promise, finding Christ in it, he *eats* it, and it is to him *the joy and rejoicing of his heart;* he finds the Lord in his own word of grace, and this makes it relieving and comforting to his soul; he drinks in *the sincere milk of the word* because in it he *tastes that the Lord is gracious.* But now presumptuous faith is more taken up with the naked promises, than with *feeding* the soul with Christ in and by the promise. A man that is possessed of Christ by faith, has not Christ and his promise by him, as a man has money lying by him in his coffer; he has not the covenant and promises, as a man has his bonds and charters in his cabinet, which perhaps he will not look to once in a year: no, but he has Christ in the word of grace, as a man has his bread by him, which he is daily feeding and living upon: hence this applicatory faith is called an "eating the flesh, and a drinking the blood of Christ;" which expression implies such an application of Christ to ourselves, as carries soul-nourishment along with it. True faith roots the soul in Christ, just as a tree is rooted in the ground; the prolific virtue of the earth enters into the tree, and the tree at the same time strikes and spreads its fibres into the earth, and draws sap and moisture therefrom, sending a digested nourish-

ment through the whole, by which it is made to grow and bring forth fruit. So here, in believing, the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus enters into the soul; and at the same time, there is as it were a sprig and fibre passing from every faculty of the soul, striking into Christ, and drawing a digested sap from him, by which the soul is made to grow and flourish in grace and holiness. Hence we are said to be "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." And, "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, do flourish in the courts of our God."

3*dly*, True faith receives and applies Christ according to the order that God has laid in his offices; but presumptuous faith inverts that order. The order that God has laid in the execution and application of the offices of Christ, is this: Christ comes by his word and Spirit, as a *Prophet*, enlightening the sinner's mind with the knowledge of his lost estate by nature, and the way of his recovery through his atoning blood and satisfaction: upon which the soul, by faith turns in to him as a *Priest*, taking sanctuary under the covert of his everlasting righteousness; and so submits to him as a *King*, receiving the law from his mouth, and yielding itself to his government, from a principle of gratitude to him who has bought it with a price. But now the presumptuous faith of the legalist inverts and disturbs this comely order laid by infinite wisdom among the offices of Christ: for in his way of applying Christ, he begins with the *kingly* office, pretending to obey him as a *Lawgiver;* and, upon this ground, expects that Christ will save him as a *Priest* by his righteousness; and thus makes his own obedience the ground of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. And what else is this, but to bring *money and price*, contrary to the express command of God? Is. lv. 1. Nothing can be of a more pernicious tendency toward the overthrow of the freedom of God's grace, in the great affair of justification and salvation. Hence it is the apostle so much inveighs against this method of seeking justification, in the Galatians; insomuch that he tells them expressly, that by this way they made themselves "debtors to do the whole law; yea," says he, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace," Gal. v. 2—4. This method of inverting the order of Christ's offices, and making the first act of faith to terminate upon him as a *king*, as it is a way of thinking most agreeable to nature, which runs with a mighty bias towards Adam's covenant: so, I judge, nature is much fortified in this way of taking up the method of salvation by Christ, by the strain of some men's doctrine in our day, who inculcate *faith* and *repentance* as *new precepts* given out by Christ in the gospel, which were never required in the moral law of the ten com-

mandments. For if this be so, then inevitably we must first obey Christ as a *king*, by repenting and believing, in order to our being justified by him as a *priest*; besides many other dangerous consequences which are unavoidable upon this new law-scheme. All which are avoided, by teaching, with the strain of orthodox divines, that there are no *precepts* in the *gospel* strictly taken; and that Christ in the gospel gives no *new laws*, but enforces the *old law*, namely, the *moral*, which being adapted to the gospel-dispensation, obliges us to believe in Christ upon his being revealed to us in the gospel, and consequently to repent also in an evangelical manner. For that these duties of faith and repentance, as to their essence, are required in the very first commandment of the moral law, is indisputably evident; and I do think it strange, to find it controverted by any who embrace and own the doctrine of the church of Scotland, particularly the Larger Catechism, where that point is plainly determined, in the explication of the foresaid first commandment. But it is not proper to insist on this controversy in a discourse of this nature; if need be, it may be discussed apart.

4*thly*, Another difference betwixt the *my* of faith, and the *my* of presumption, is this, That the assurance of faith will maintain its claim, and humble confidence, even under sad challenges, and a deep and abasing sense of much prevailing iniquity; whereas presumptuous confidence succumbs and fails upon the prevalency of sin. The reason of this is, because the ground of presumptuous confidence is within the man; some good disposition and qualification which he finds within him, as he apprehends, which being dashed by the eruption of his reigning lusts, he has no more to look to; the foundation of his confidence is gone. But now, faith builds and bases its confidence, not within, but on something without, namely, the everlasting righteousness of the Lord Jesus, and the mercy of God running in this channel, exhibited in the word of grace. Here it is that faith sets down its foot, and upon this foundation it stands, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. And thus, having the ground of its confidence from without, it is not shaken with every insurrection from within. An instance of which we see in David, Psal. lxv. 3. The holy man, in the first part of the verse, cries out, under a sense of the strength, power, and guilt of sin, "Iniquities prevail against me." Well, but what says faith in such a case? "As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." Another instance of the like nature, we see in the same holy man, Psal. cxxx. We find him, ver. 3, under such a sense of sin and guilt, that, viewing himself as he stood in the eye of the law and of justice, he cannot shun to own, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"

Well, but where does David's faith find a standing in such a case? Only in the mercy and grace of a reconciled God in Christ; and therefore he adds, ver. 4, "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared; and plenteous redemption, that thou mayest be sought unto." I do own, that a real believer may be sadly shaken, as to the confidence of his interest in Christ, under prevailing iniquity; but this certainly is his infirmity, and not his faith. Many real believers live more by sense than by faith; and hence it comes that they are soon shaken, whenever sensible experience is overclouded, under the sense of prevailing iniquity; though the pain of it is a just correction of their folly. Whenever faith recovers from under the fit of unbelief, and views what the soul is, and has, in Christ, and in the covenant, it recovers its stability and confidence, and withal, brings into the soul strength against corruption, so that it goes out against it "like a giant refreshed with wine." But, say you, may not presumptuous faith recover its confidence also? I answer, No doubt it may: but then the difference lies here—True faith goes to work in quite a different way, in order to the soul's recovery, from that which the presumptuous legalist takes. When the terrors of the law, or challenges of conscience, have at any time battered down presumptuous confidence, the man goes to work and fills up the hole that the law has made in his soul, with the new earth of his own obedience, reformation, duties, and the like, and with this "untempered morter" he daubs and makes up the breach made in his conscience. But, on the other hand, though the believer be as diligent in the way of duty as the other, yet nothing in heaven or earth can satisfy him under challenges, or afford him ease or quiet, but Christ himself, and his righteousness apprehended and applied by faith: no *balm* but that of *Gilead* can cure his wound; he fetches his healing only from under the wings of the Sun of righteousness; all is but *loss* and *dung* in comparison of this, Phil. iii. 8, 9.

There are several other differences might be given between the *my* of faith, and the *my* of presumption, if I were not afraid of being tedious. Only, in short, the more of the assurance of faith, or yet of well-grounded experience, the more lowliness, humility, and self-abasement. The higher that the soul is exalted in and by Christ, the lower does it sink in its own eyes, saying with David, when God promised to build him a sure house, and that the Messiah should spring of his loins, "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" The poor believer, in this case, sees himself to be such a miracle of rich and sovereign grace, that he is even wrapped up in a silent wonder, and put to an everlasting stand, that he knows not what to say,

"And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" And what can David say more? But now, the more of a presumptuous confidence, the more pride and self-conceit, like Laodicea, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;" accompanied with an undervaluing of others in comparison of themselves, like the proud Pharisee, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, or even as this publican."

Again; presumptuous assurance cherishes some secret and beloved idol: the man spares some right-hand or right-eye sin; and commonly his deceitful heart argues for its being spared, because grace doth abound. But now, true faith and experience purifies the heart, and engages the man to an impartial and universal opposition to all sin, as dishonourable to God, and grieving to his Spirit; and readily he directs his principal force against these sins, which receive the greatest advantages against him, by interest, custom, constitution, or education; and the consideration of abounding grace is so far from encouraging him in sin, that it teaches him to "deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world."

Lastly, The *my* of faith, or solid experience, is always accompanied with much love to the person of Christ, and resignation of soul to him; for "faith worketh by love." And therefore, at the same time, that the soul is enabled to say, "My beloved is mine," it cannot shun to add, "And I am his. —One shall say, I am the Lord's." The man presents himself "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is his reasonable service." But now, as one well observes, presumption is lame of one hand: it has a hand to take pardon, to take heaven, and the benefits of Christ; but as it has no true love to his person, so it has not a hand to give or resign the whole man to the Lord, to be for him, and not for another: and the plain reason of this is, that the power of natural enmity was never broken, and the man is married to the law, and to his lusts also. But passing this, I proceed to

CHAPTER IV.

Of the FULL *Assurance of Faith.*

III. THE *third* general head proposed in the method, was to speak a little *of the* FULL *assurance of faith;* for there is a plain gradation in the apostle's way of speaking: there is *faith*, then the *assurance* of faith, and then the *full* assurance of faith. Having spoken of the two first degrees, I proceed now to the last and highest degree of faith.

Before I go on directly to show what this *full* assurance of

faith is, I premise these two or three things, which I conceive to be imported in this expression of the Spirit of God: (1.) I premise, that the faith of every believer is not of the same *size* and *strength*. Some have a *strong*, and others have a *weak* faith: yea, the faith of the strongest believer, like the moon, has its waxings and wanings: or, like the sea, its ebbings and flowings. Although every believer be in Christ, yet every believer has not the same measure of faith; as every star is in the heavens, though every star be not of the same magnitude. The rounds of Jacob's ladder were not all at the top, though every round was a step towards heaven; so, though every faith be not triumphing in a full assurance, yet every true faith is bending towards it. You may see one believer under a full gale of the Spirit of faith, crying, with Job, chap. xix. 25, "I know that my Redeemer liveth:" while another labours under such discouragements, that, like the publican, he "stands afar off," with the tear in his eye, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." You may see one saying with Paul, "He loved me, and gave himself for me:" another, through the prevalence of unbelief, saying, "Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Hath he forgotten to be gracious?" Perhaps you shall find one believer surmounting all fears, saying with the apostle, "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?" &c., while another is combating with many doubts, ready to "raze foundations," saying, "I am cast out of thy sight;" and all men are liars that will say otherwise, the prophets of God not excepted. It is with believers, as it is with children in a family; one perhaps is lying in the cradle, another led by the mother or nurse, another can walk alone, a fourth come to such full strength that he is able for work and business. Thus, in the household of God there are *babes*, *young men*, and *fathers*. (2.) I premise, that it is the duty of every believer, yea, of the weakest, to press after faith in the *highest degree* of it. Hence it is that Christ frequently checks his disciples for the weakness of their faith, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?—O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" True faith is a progressive thing, it goes on from one degree to another: hence is that expression of the apostle, Rom. i. 17: "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." Faith, in its first and weaker, and faith in its repeated and stronger actings, feeds and centres upon the righteousness of God's operation and imputation, for acceptance, pardon, and salvation. It is of the nature of all true grace, particularly of the grace of faith, to breathe after its own increase and perfection: hence is that prayer of the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith;" and that of the poor man in the gospel, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbe-

lief." We must forget things that are behind, and reach forth to things that are before: "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (3.) I premise, that the certainty or assurance of *application*, as explained above, ebbs or flows according to the strength or weakness of the *assent* of faith. That there are degrees of assurance, will be controverted by none, who have any knowledge either of divinity or philosophy. The very words of the apostle in the text import, that we are not to rest in a lower, but ought to press after the highest degree of the assurance of faith: and the apostle accounts it a great blessing to the Thessalonians, that they had *much assurance*, 1 Thess. i. 5: plainly intimating, that some true assurance might be in a less degree. Now, I say, this assurance of application bears a proportion to faith's assent, and waxes or wanes as it is strong or feeble; so that a strong assent has a strong application, and a weak assent a weak application.

These things premised, I proceed to inquire what this *full assurance of faith* is, or in what it consists. And, in one word, I conceive it lies in such 'a firm and fixed persuasion, confidence, or trust in the faithfulness of a God in Christ, pledged in his covenant or promise, as overcomes and tramples upon all difficulties and improbabilities, all doubts and fears as to the actual performance of what is promised in God's time and way; and all this with particular application to the soul itself.' This description I would illustrate and explain in its several branches, were it not done upon the matter on the former two heads; this being nothing but a higher degree of the self-same faith formerly described. Such an act of faith we find put forth by Abraham, Rom. iv. 20, 21, where we are told that "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith giving glory to God: being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform." This full assurance of faith though mountains of impediments were in its way, yet makes no more of them than if they were a plain; it overleaps and overlooks them all, fixing its eye only upon the power and faithfulness of the blessed Promiser: as we see clearly exemplified in the case of Abraham. His own body was dead, and incapable of procreation; Sarah's womb was barren, and incapable of conception: sense and reason in this case would have been ready to conclude, that it was impossible ever Abraham should have a son. But we are told, ver. 19, that he entirely abstracted from all considerations of that kind, "Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb." He would not so much as listen to the surmises of carnal reason; flesh and blood are put out of doors;

and he rests with an assured confidence, without any doubting or hesitation, upon the fidelity of the Promiser, being certain that God would do to him in particular as he had said, when the time of the vision should come. In like manner we find, that after Abraham had gotten his beloved Isaac, the son of the promise, what a terrible shock, may one think, would it be to his faith in the promise, when God commanded him to take Isaac, of whom the promised seed (Christ) was to come, and offer him upon one of the mountains of Moriah! Gen. xxii. Reason here might be ready to object, and that not without great colour of religion, Can God, who has so severely forbidden murder, require me to imbrue my hands in the blood of my own son? Will not such a thing be an eternal reproach to Abraham and his religion? What will the Egyptians say, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, who dwell in the land? What will Sarah say, and how shall I ever look her in the face? But especially what shall become of the promise, and the veracity of him that made it, saying, *In Isaac shall thy seed be called?* Surely might unbelief and sense say, either this command is a delusion, or else the promise is a lie. But Abraham had a full assurance of faith as to the stability of the promise; and, therefore, he would upon all hazards obey the command of a promising God: he was fully persuaded that though Isaac were sacrificed and burnt to ashes, yet out of the very ashes of his sacrificed son, God could, and actually would raise up Isaac again, and so accomplish his own word of promise. Abraham, on the account of this his noble and gallant faith, is fitly called *the father of the faithful*, his faith being proposed as a pattern to all others for their imitation; and every true believer is on this score a "child of Abraham." And let none imagine that they are not obliged to believe with such a faith as Abraham had; for the apostle expressly tells us, that the history of his faith stands upon record in scripture, "not for his sake alone, but for us also," that we, after his example, may be encouraged to "believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead," Rom. iv. 23, 24.

Object. O, say you, if I had as good ground for my faith as Abraham had; if I were as sure that the promise were to *me*, as Abraham was, I think I could believe with a full assurance of faith, as he did: but there lies the strait. I answer, You and I have as good ground of faith as ever Abraham had. Abraham had a promising God in Christ to trust, and so have we. You have the same God, the same Christ, the same covenant, the same promise, as Abraham had. But, say you, God spake to Abraham, in *particular*, *by name*, when he gave him the promise, saying, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." I answer, Although you be

not designated by name and surname, as Abraham was, yet a promising God in Christ addresses himself as particularly to you in the word of grace, and the dispensation of the covenant and promise, as though he called to you out of heaven by name and surname, saying, "To you (that is, to you sinners of Adam's race) is the word of this salvation sent. The promise is unto you that are afar off," &c. And not only is the promise presented, but an express command of believing superadded, requiring and binding every particular person, to take hold of it, and embrace it: so that, whatever shifts and evasions the unbelieving and deceitful heart may make, the promise of God comes as close and home to every individual hearer of the gospel, as that promise did to Abraham, when God spake to him with an audible voice out of heaven; yea, "We have a more sure word of prophecy, unto which we would do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." Farther, let it be considered that that promise was first presented to Abraham as the object and foundation of his faith, before he could believe it; and by believing it, became *his* in possession; or in believing it, he was possessed of it as *his own;* for, upon a supposition that he had not believed, he had never been possessed of the promised blessing. In like manner, the promise is presented to you as the immediate ground of believing; and in believing, you come to be possessed of the great things contained in the promise; but if you do not believe, you shall not see "the salvation of God," Thus you see that you have the same ground of faith and the same warrant for believing, that Abraham had: and there is nothing to keep you from a full assurance of faith, or a believing without staggering at the promise, like Abraham, unless it be your own ignorance and unbelief.

I own, as was hinted already, that every true believer does not come the length of Abraham, to believe without staggering; but that is not the question. The present question is, If we have not now as good and firm a ground, and as good a right to believe the promise as Abraham had? If Christ, and his salvation and righteousness, be not brought as near to us in the word of faith, as it was to him? This is what none, who understand the privilege of a New Testament dispensation, will venture to deny; yea, I will venture to say, that the ground of faith is laid before us under the New Testament, with a far greater advantage than ever Abraham had; inasmuch as the gospel-revelation is much more clear, and brings Christ and his salvation much nearer to us, than ever he was under any period of the old Testament dispensation. *Abraham saw his day* only *afar off;* whereas we live in that very day which he saw at such a prodigious distance: and, therefore, we have much more ground to believe without

staggering than he had. And, therefore, "seeing we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;" and "seeing we have a new and living way consecrated for us, through the veil of his flesh;" and "seeing we have a High Priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart, in FULL ASSURANCE of faith," &c.

CHAPTER V.

Of the GROUNDS *of Faith's Assurance.*

IV. THE *fourth* thing proposed in the method, was to *inquire into the* GROUNDS *of this doctrine;* or *what it is that faith has to build its confidence upon, in drawing near to God with full assurance of acceptance.* In answer to this question, I shall not at present enter upon the particular grounds specified by the apostle in the preceding verses, having discoursed on them apart in several sermons, where he shows that every bar and impediment on the part of law and justice are fully removed, through the complete satisfaction and prevalent mediation of the Son of God, as our great High Priest; upon which a promise of welcome and hearty acceptance comes forth from a reconciled God, to every one who will come to him in this "new and living way," for grace and mercy to help in a time of need. Thus, you will see the apostle's argument runs, by comparing this and the preceding verses, with the verse immediately following, particularly the last clause of it, "For faithful is he that hath promised;" which clause, included in a parenthesis, I conceive stands connected, not only with the words immediately preceding in the same verse, but with the words of my text also: and the scope of the apostle is, as if he said, *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,* &c. Why? "For faithful is he that hath promised" us welcome "into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus:" faithful is he that hath promised acceptance in the "new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us:" faithful is he that hath promised to pity, pardon, hear, and help, through the mediation of the "great High Priest over the house of God." And, therefore, seeing his faithfulness is pledged to receive us in this way of his own devising, let us answer his faithfulness, by "drawing near in full assurance of faith," or with a full and certain persuasion, that, according to his promise, we shall be "accepted in the beloved," who is the "door" to the holiest, the "new and living way," and the "High Priest over the house of God."

So that you see the next or immediate ground of faith, or

full assurance thereof, in drawing near to God, is, God's own promise of acceptance through Jesus Christ: with which promises the word every where abounds, Is. lx. 7; Is. lvi. 7; Mark xi. 24; Matth. vii. 7; John xiv. 13, 14. Now, faith, eyeing and pleading the promise of God in Christ, has many things to bear it up into a full assurance; I shall instance a few of many.

1. The *grace*, *mercy*, and *goodness* of a promising God, revealed and proclaimed in the word, is a noble ground for sinners, and yet more for saints, to trust him, and draw near to him through Christ, with a full assurance of faith: Psal. xxxvi. 7: "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." It is contrary to the very dictates of nature, for a man to trust one whom he apprehends to be an enemy. If we have but a suspicion that one bears us an ill-will, or designs our hurt, we will not trust or confide in him: but persuade a man once that such a one is his friend, that he has an entire love and kindness for him, and wants only an opportunity to do him the greatest services he is capable; in that case, he will trust him without hesitation. Just so is it with the case in hand: so long as we conceive God to be an implacable enemy, our prejudice and enmity against him will remain; and while enmity against God stands in its full strength, it is absolutely impossible we can have any trust or confidence in him: instead of drawing near to him with full assurance of faith, we flee from him, like our first parents, under the awful apprehensions of his wrath and vengeance: but let us once be persuaded that he is a God of love, grace, pity, and good-will in Christ, then, and never till then, will we put our trust under the shadow of his wings. And therefore, to break the strength of our enmity and prejudice, and so to conciliate our trust in him, he is at the greatest pains imaginable to persuade us, that he bears a hearty liking and good-will toward us in Christ. And there are more especially these three ways God takes to convince us of his good-will toward men upon earth.

1*st*, By solemn proclamations and declarations of his mercy and grace: Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7: there the Lord passed by Moses, and proclaimed his name to him; and what is it? "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty;" or, as some read it, *in clearing he will clear;* That is, in clearing the sinner of guilt by pardoning grace, he will clear himself of injustice; he will make it appear that "he is just," when he is "the justifier of him that believes in Jesus." Every where in

scripture is the pardoning mercy of God proclaimed and presented as an encouragement to sinners to trust in him; Psal. cxxx. 7: "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption."

2*dly*, By solemn oath. Lest we should disbelieve his word, he superadds his oath, to convince us that he has no ill-will, but a hearty good-will toward our salvation and happiness, through the new and living way: Ezek. xxxiii. 11: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "An oath," among men, is "for confirmation" of a controverted truth, and "is to them an end of all strife," (says the apostle,) Heb. vi. 16. Shall the oath of a man be so much regarded, as to determine controversies among men? How much more is the oath of the great God to be regarded, pawning his very life upon it, that he is not willing that any should perish, that he bears a hearty good-will toward our salvation through Christ? Shall this be any more a controversy with us? To entertain a doubt or jealousy of what he says, is to make him a liar; and to doubt and disbelieve what he swears, is to charge a God of truth with perjury. And beware of looking upon it as a matter of indifference, whether you believe this declared good-will, mercy, and grace of God, or not; for that in which God interposes the solemnity of an oath, must needs be a matter of vast importance; and to think otherwise, is to charge the eternal God with a profanation of his own name, which he will not suffer in others without the highest resentment.

3*dly*, As if his word and his oath were not enough to convince us of his mercy, love, and good-will toward us, he has given the most convincing and practical demonstration of it that was possible for God to give, and that is, by giving himself, in the person of his eternal Son, to be incarnate, or manifested in our nature; to be made even like to us in all things, sin only excepted. O how "great is this mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh!" Without controversy, great and unsearchable is the mystery of love and good-will that shines with a meridian lustre in an incarnate Deity. If God had not loved us, and borne such a hearty desire after our happiness and salvation, would he ever have made such a near approach to us as to dwell in our nature, when he passed by the nature of angels? Yea, he was not content to become one with us in nature; but he goes farther, and becomes one in law with us; he puts his name into our debt-bond, and becomes "sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" he becomes "a curse for us, that we might inherit the blessing." It was a view of this

design of love to man, shining in the incarnation of the Son of God, which made the angels at his birth to break forth with that celestial anthem, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men," Luke ii. 14. Now, this love, and good-will of God toward man, in the incarnation of his eternal Son, is proposed in the gospel-revelation, as the greatest encouragement imaginable for guilty rebellious sinners to lay aside their enmity and prejudice against God, and so to put their trust and confidence in him; as is plain, like a sunbeam, from that great text, John iii. 16: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son:" Why, what was God's design in all this good-will? "That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Because of the excellency of this love, "the sons of men do put their trust under the shadow of his wings." Now, I say, faith, in drawing near to God, takes a view of this mercy and love of God in Christ, and upon this ground raises itself up sometimes so high, as to draw near in full assurance of acceptance: for still it should be remembered, that faith, under the conduct of the Spirit, takes up this revealed love and mercy of God to sinners, with particular application of it to the soul itself, as was before hinted. And what can be more encouraging to a trust, without doubting of acceptance? O then, "let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy." O do not entertain jealousies of a God of love, as though he were displeased or dissatisfied with you for your trusting in his mercy; for "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."

2. Faith grounds its assurance upon the infinite *power* of a promising God. Being once persuaded of his love, mercy, and good-will in Christ, it proceeds to fasten its foot upon *everlasting strength*, as fully able to fulfil what he has promised, saying, I know that thou canst do every thing, and *there is nothing too hard for thee.*" Indeed, infinite power, armed with wrath and fury, is the terror of a guilty sinner; but infinite power, animated with infinite love, proclaiming, "Fury is not in me," through the *ransom* that *I have found*, is a noble ground of trust, and may imbolden a guilty sinner to "take hold of his strength, that he may make peace with him." Hence it is, that the power of God in Christ is frequently presented in scripture as a ground of trust; Is. xxvi. 4: "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." The faith of Abraham founded itself upon this rock of the power of God, in that fore-cited instance, (Rom. iv.) when he believed without staggering at the promise. Being first persuaded of God's good-will toward him, in giving him a promise of the Messiah to spring of his loins, "in whom all

the nations of the earth should be blessed;" he next fixes the eye of his faith upon the power of this promising God, and was "fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform." So, Matth. ix. 27, we read of two blind men following Christ, sending their cries after him. "Thou son of David, have mercy on us." They first believed that Christ was the promised Messiah, the son of David; and in this they saw mercy and good-will to man upon earth, he being the seed of the woman, that should bruise the head of the serpent." Well, Christ leads them on next to take a view of the power of God in him, as a farther ground of trust and confidence: ver. 28; "Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this?" They answer, "Yea, Lord:" and thereupon Christ says to them, ver. 29, "According to your faith, be it unto you." Thus, I say, faith grounds its trust, confidence, or assurance, in drawing near to God through the "new and living way," upon the *power* of a promising God.

O, sirs, there is no such distance betwixt God's saying and his doing, as there is among men; for his saying is doing: Psal. xxxiii. 9: "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." There is an omnipotence or almightiness both in his word of command, and in his word of promise; therefore it is called "the word of his power," Heb. i. 3. And by this powerful word, he upholds the great fabric of heaven and earth, that they do not return to their original nothing: and may not our faith venture to stand upon that bottom, on which heaven and earth stand? We are not afraid that this ponderous globe of earth, which hangs in the liquid air, will slide away from under our feet with its own weight: Why? Because we believe that the word of God's power has fixed it in its proper place, that it shall not be removed for ever. Why should we not rest with as much assured confidence, as to everlasting concerns, upon God's covenant and promise, seeing the same power of God is in the word of promise, as in that word which upholds the earth? Yea, "the fashion of this world passeth away, but the word of the Lord," his word of grace and promise, the foundation of faith and trust, "endureth for ever." This is a consideration which at once removes the principal discouragements that faith labours under. What is it that weakens our faith, and keeps it from arriving at a full assurance, as to the performance of the promise, but one of these two? Either we look upon the performance of the promise as difficult, or uncertain. Now, faith eyeing the power of a promising, reconciled God in Christ, can easily surmount both, and conclude, that the performance of the promise is both easy and certain. (1.) It is *certain*, for it depends upon the will of an unchangeable God, the promise being a

declaration of God's purpose or will of grace; he was willing to promise, for he has actually done it, "the word is gone out of his mouth;" and he is willing to perform, for he is *a God of truth*, always *yea*, and *amen*. (2.) Faith, viewing the power of God, sees the performance to be *easy*. What is more easy than speaking a word? and yet one word from the mouth of God, can give being and accomplishment to all the promises, without any pain, cost, trouble, or hazard. The covenant of grace may be resembled to a tree, the promises to the branches of the tree, loaded with all manner of precious fruit. Now, the least word, the least breath from the mouth of God, shakes the tree, and makes all the fruit of it to drop down, as it were, into the believer's bosom. And O, may the believer argue, will not he, who *so loved* a lost *world*, as to *give his only begotten Son*, and *who loved me, and gave himself for me*, will not he spend a word, or the breath of his mouth, on *me?* Believe it, there is nothing but a word between you and all the *sure mercies of David:* yea, the word is already passed out of his mouth, I mean, the word of grace and promise; and there remains nothing but for you to believe, trust, confide in it, and him that made it; and, in your so doing, all the sure mercies of the promise are your own in Christ. I suppose you do not doubt, but that God who cannot lie has promised. Now, there is as much reason to believe that he will perform, as to believe that he has passed his promise; for as was hinted above, to promise and perform, to say and to do, are all one thing with him. Indeed, when men promise, there is much ground to doubt the performance, because frequently things cast up afterward, which render it impracticable for them to do as they have said. But no such thing can happen unto him, who perfectly foresees all future events, and who "commands things that are not, as if they were." Now, I say, faith sees all this, and thereby raises itself up to a full assurance, at least there is ground here for a full assurance of faith, and no ground at all for doubting and wavering. And were not our faith pinioned with ignorance and unbelief, it could not miss to believe without staggering upon this ground, as did the faith of Abraham.

3. The *veracity* and *faithfulness* of a God in Christ, pledged in the promise, is another ground upon which faith builds, when it draws near with a full assurance. Faithfulness in God, and faith in man, are correlates; and there is such a fitness and relation between these two, that our faith cannot subsist without faithfulness in God. And, on the other hand, a revelation of God's faithfulness would have been needless, if there were not some to believe him. The light would be useless, if there were not an eye to see it; and the eye would be useless, if there were no light. To an unbelieving sinner,

the revelation of the divine faithfulness is as unprofitable, as light is to a blind man; and our faith would be like an eye without light, if there were not faithfulness in God. Yea, faithfulness in God is the very parent of faith in man. Faith is at first begotten and wrought in the soul by some discovery of the divine faithfulness in the word of grace; and it is maintained and increased in the same way and manner. Whence is it that some believe, and others not, who equally enjoy the same revealed warrants and grounds of faith? The matter is this, the faithfulness of God in the covenant and promise is revealed by the Spirit to the one, and veiled and hid from the other, "the god of this world blinding the minds of them which believe not." And whence is it, that at one time a believer is "strong in faith, giving glory to God;" and at another time, "staggers through unbelief?" The reason is this, the faithfulness of God at one time is so visible to him, that he sees it to be like a *mountain of brass* under him: at another time his light is so dark and dim, that he imagines the promise, and the faithfulness of the Promiser, to be but like a *broken reed*, not able to bear his weight. But, O sirs, what can be ground of assurance, yea of the highest and fullest assurance of faith, if not the veracity of that God, who hath "righteousness for the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness for the girdle of his reins?"

Let us but take a view of the high *securities* by which the divine *faithfulness* is engaged, as to the out-making of his *promise*, and see if there be not *ground* for a full assurance of faith. The most jealous and suspicious heart in the world, could not desire greater security from the most treacherous person on earth, than a God of truth has granted to us, for our encouragement to believe.

1*st*, Then, Let it be considered, that the *bare promise*, though there were no more, is abundance of security, especially if we consider whose promise it is; it is "God that cannot lie, who promises." A graceless Balaam gives him this testimony, "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" We will venture to trust the word of a man like ourselves, especially if he be a man of integrity and honesty, who, we think, will not falsify his word: and shall we have trust and credit to give to a man who may lie and repent, and yet no credit or trust to give to him "for whom it is impossible to lie?" God has so great a regard to his word of promise, that it is of more worth in his reckoning than heaven and earth, and all the visible creation; yea, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle of what he hath spoken shall never

fall to the ground." Yea, I will adventure to say, farther, that the divine faithfulness is so much engaged in the promise, that his very *being* is concerned in it. Man may break his word, and continue to be man still; but God could not be God, if he were not faithful and true, because faithfulness is essential to his very nature and being. Now, is not that word a sufficient ground of faith, and of full assurance, as to the performance of which the very *being* of a God of truth is so much concerned? But this is not all; for,

2*dly*, Not only is the word of promise passed out of his lips, but it is *entered* and *registered* in the *volume of his book*. You know, the bare word of an honest man is good, but his written and registered word or promise is better. When we put a man's bond in the register of human courts, it is in order to our better security, and getting the more speedy diligence thereupon. Now, God has consented to the registration of his word of promise, yea, it is actually enrolled and registered in the scriptures of truth; and is not this a high engagement of the faithfulness of God? Perhaps you may think, if you had voices, visions, and revelations from heaven immediately, you could believe; but I can assure you, in the name of God, that the Bible, the book of God, which you have among your hands, is a far better, a much more solid ground of faith and trust, than any thing of that kind. The apostle Peter tells us, 2 Pet. i. 17, that he was taken up into mount Tabor, at Christ's transfiguration, and there he heard a voice coming forth from the excellent glory, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This was a rare privilege, and a notable encouragement to believe: but yet, says he, ver. 19, "We have a more sure word of prophecy: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed," &c. O sirs, think on this, and prize and improve your Bibles.

3*dly*, The faithfulness of God is so much engaged in the promise, that it is a *sealed deed*. The great and infinite JEHOVAH, in the person of his eternal Son, has *sealed* the promise, yea, sealed it with his *blood*. Dan. ix. 27, we are told concerning the Messiah, that he should *confirm the covenant with many*. And how does he confirm it, but by his death? Hence the blood of Christ is called "the blood of the covenant:" so Heb. ix. 16, 17: "Where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all whilst the testator liveth." Thus, I say, the promise is sealed and confirmed by the blood of the Lamb, the most valuable seal that ever was appended to any deed in the world. And, in token and testimony of its being sealed by a Redeemer's blood, God has appended two other visible seals to his covenant of

promise, namely, baptism and the Lord's supper, which are "seals of the righteousness of faith;" that is, as I take it, seals of that covenant where God promises peace and pardon, grace and glory, on the score of the imputed righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith. And whenever these sacraments are dispensed to us, according to God's appointment, we have a sealed and confirmed promise and testament put into our hands, for our faith to feed and feast upon.

4thly, The faithfulness of God is so far engaged in the promise, that his *oath* is interposed: Heb. vi. 13—18: there we read of "two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie." His word is immutable, for it is always *yea*. But that we might have strong consolation, by having a strong ground of faith and confidence, he superadds his immutable oath: he not only speaks, but swears. Now, observe how the apostle speaks of the oath of God, ver. 13: "Because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself;" as if he had said, If God could have gone higher in his oath, he would have done it. The form of God's oath is peculiar to himself, *As I live;* he swears by his life, he swears by his holiness, he swears by his being and Godhead. As true as I am God, *I will bless thee*, says the Lord to Abraham, ver. 14. But, may a poor soul say, what is that to me? what interest or concern have I in God's oath to Abraham? O yes, says the apostle, this concerns you and me, "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us," ver. 18: as if he should say, This concerns every poor soul, that has a mind for salvation in the "new and living way consecrated for us." He may say, and should say in himself, As sure as God said and sware to Abraham, so surely hath God said and sworn that I shall be saved, in fleeing for refuge to Christ, who is our hope. As if the Lord should say, O sinner, I set my own Son before thee in the gospel, as thy only refuge and sanctuary; I set him forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood; O flee, flee to him for thy life. "Turn ye to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope;" for as sure as I am God, thou shalt be saved in him: "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." O what a great matter is this, the oath of God! What will we ever believe, or whom will we believe, if we do not believe a God of truth swearing by his life? Do not say, you are not concerned with his oath; for as by believing you set to your seal, that he is *true* in what he says and swears; so by your unbelief you call him a *liar*, and, upon the matter, charge him with perjury, as was already hinted. And for you who have actually fled by faith to his Son, you shall be as sure of God's blessing through eternity, as ever Abraham was, when he heard God swearing to him,

"Surely, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying, I will multiply thee."

5*thly*, The faithfulness of God is yet farther engaged to believers in the promise, by giving a *pledge* or *earnest* of the full performance: and the pledge he gives, is of more worth than heaven and earth. O, say you, what is that? I answer, It is the "Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the inheritance," Eph. i. 13, 14. If ever thou felt the Holy Spirit breathing on thee, by his saving influences and operations, thou hast the earnest of the inheritance, a pledge that all the promises shall be fully accomplished in God's time. You know, if a man give a pledge, it is a security for the full bargain; and if a man do not fulfil his bargain, he loses his pledge: so here, God will as soon forfeit his Spirit, as break his word. And is not this notable security to the believer? Is not this a high engagement of the faithfulness of God?

6*thly*, The faithfulness of God is yet farther engaged in the promise, by the *concurring declaration* of the most famous *witnesses* that ever bore testimony in any cause, jointly attesting the truth of the promise, and veracity of the Promiser, 1 John v. 7: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." The eternal Father attests the truth of the promise with a "Thus saith the Lord." The Son attests it, who is the essential and substantial Word; for he is "the truth, the Amen, the faithful and true witness, who speaks in righteousness." The Holy Ghost attests it; for he is "the Spirit of truth, leading into all truth;" he is the *Holy Spirit of promise*, not only because he himself is promised, but because he testifies of the truth of the promise, and faithfulness of the Promiser; and by his power and efficacy, seals and stamps these upon the soul, by which he works faith or believing. Now, all these three witnesses are *one;* not only one in essence, but one in their testimony. And what is the testimony and record of a Trinity? It is this, ver. 11: "That God hath given" (that is, granted in his covenant of grace and promise) "to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." And when this record or testimony of a Trinity is not believed, we make God a liar. From the whole, you see what high and deep engagements the divine faithfulness is come under for the out-making and accomplishment of the promise. O, then, "let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; for faithful is he that hath promised" acceptance in the beloved."

But now, after all that has been said, some may be ready to object, It is true, the good-will, power, and veracity of the Promiser, are excellent encouragements to those who have

a right to the promise to draw near to God in Christ with full assurance of faith: but that is my strait and difficulty, I doubt and fear, lest I have no claim or title to the promise of welcome into "the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by that new and living way." An answer to this leads me to,

4. A *fourth* ground (taken in connexion with the former) upon which faith may build its assurance, in drawing near to God by the new and living way, and that is, the *endorsement* or *direction* of the promise of welcome through Christ. To whom, say you, is the promise endorsed? I answer, It is directed to *every man* to whom the joyful sound of this everlasting gospel reaches, John iii. 16. There you see that the promise of acceptance, and of eternal life through Christ, reaches forth its arms to a lost world: "Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." So here, Whosoever draweth near to the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by the "new and living way," through the mediation of the great High Priest, shall "obtain grace and mercy to help them in time of need." The covenant of grace, and promises thereof, are so framed by Infinite Wisdom, in the external dispensation of the gospel, that they look to every man and woman; and, as it were, invite them to believe, and encourage them to enter into the holiest. He that sits on a throne of grace, calls every one within his hearing, to come for grace and mercy, assuring them, that come to him who will, "he will in no wise cast out." And we that are the heralds and ministers of the great King, whose name is "the Lord, merciful and gracious," have warrant and commission to proclaim, that "to you, men," and "the sons of man, is the word of this salvation sent: The promise is" directed to you, as a ground of faith, even "to you, and to your seed, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." There is not the least peradventure, but the call or command of believing is to every one; otherwise unbelief could not be their sin. Now, the promise, in the endorsement and direction of it, must be as extensive as the command: these two are inseparably linked together, both in the external dispensation, and in the inward application of the Spirit; insomuch that whosoever is commanded to believe, has right to the promise, as the immediate ground of his faith; and whosoever actually believes, and builds upon this ground, has the promise in his possession. Take away the promise from the command of believing, you separate what God has joined together, and, in effect, command men to build without a foundation. It is true, Christ is the object of faith; but it is as true, that he can only be the object of faith to us, as he is brought near in the word of faith or promise, Rom. x. 8: And therefore, see-

ing the promise is to you and me, and every one who hears this gospel, I may warrantably say with the apostle, Heb. iv. 1, "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." From which text it is plain, that the promise of an everlasting rest, in and through Christ, is *left* even to those who, like the Israelites, may *come short of it* through unbelief. And how is it left us, but to be applied by faith? Christ our elder brother has left his confirmed testament in our hands, to be improved and used in a way of believing, in order to our being actually entitled to, and in due time, fully possessed of that rest, which is the purchase of his death and blood. O, then, let us fear, lest, when the promise is thus left us, we should seem to come short of the possession; for the promise can never be ours in possession, though *left us*, unless we believe; as is plain from the words immediately following, ver. 2, where it is added, concerning the unbelieving Jews, "The word preached" (namely, the promise of "entering into his rest," as is plain from the connexion) "did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." A king's proclamation, and promise of pardon to a company of rebels, cannot profit any of them but such as accept of it. A legacy left by latter-will of a rich and wealthy friend, to a certain family, without specifying one individual person of the family, can only profit that person, or those branches of the family who claim right to the legacy, upon their friend's testament; but to the rest it is unprofitable, because, through pride, or ignorance, or sloth, they forsake their own mercy. Or, suppose a letter should come endorsed to me, containing a bank-note of 50, 100, or 1000 pounds sterling, or more if you will; the endorsement of the letter to me, gives me a right to carry the bill to the bank, and ask payment: but if, through pride and conceit that I am rich, and increased with goods, I will not receive the letter, nor ask payment of the sum, in that case I come short of my own privilege, and it becomes unprofitable to me. I own, that in every one of these similitudes, there is a dissimilitude; the only use I make of them is, to show how near Christ and his salvation is brought to us in the word of faith or promise, that thereby we may be encouraged to draw near by the blood of Jesus, with full assurance of faith, seeing he is faithful that hath promised acceptance in this new and living way. To all that is said, I shall only add;

5. Let it encourage us to draw near in full assurance of faith, that there is no *lawful impediment* to hinder our access and success, in entering with boldness into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Every bar and hinderance that stood in our way, is mercifully removed by our *great High Priest*, who is

over the house of God. All the impediments that can be pleaded on God's part, are the *law*, *justice*, and *holiness* of God; and all the impediment that can be pleaded on our part is *sin.*— Now, none of these ought to hinder our drawing near in this new and living way, with full assurance of faith.

As for the *law*, that cannot be a just impediment to hinder our access; for that moment the soul enters by Christ, as the *way* to the Father, the law gets its end, Christ being "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Now, can the law be against its own end, or that which gives it its due? All that the law demands is a perfect and sinless righteousness; give it that, and it has no more to seek. Now, this the law gets, that moment that a sinner believes, or draws near by the blood of Jesus. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," Rom. viii. 3, 4. From whence it is plain, that every soul that believes in Christ, is that moment vested, by imputation, with the righteousness of the Son of God, whereby "the law is magnified, and made honourable." And therefore, in drawing near by the blood of Jesus, instead of having the law against us, we have the law for us, and on our side; we have a perfect law-righteousness to plead upon.

Again; as for the *justice* of God, this is ready to scare us, who are guilty sinners, from so much as looking toward the holiest, or the place where God's honour dwells. But this can be no impediment either to our drawing near by the blood of Jesus, with full assurance of faith: Why? That which justice demands, is a complete satisfaction for the injury done to the honour and authority of God, by the breach and violation of the holy and righteous law, which was a transcript of the purity and equity of his nature: now, when a sinner draws near, or enters into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, he gives justice that which it wants also, namely, a *ransom* of infinite value, even the *ransom* that God has *found*, the *propitiation* that God has *set forth* in the gospel, to be received by faith. The man, in believing, as it were, presents this ransom to justice for the sin of his soul; and whenever justice sees this ransom of the blood of Jesus in the hand of faith, it assoilzies and acquits the soul from all law-penalties, declaring that *now there is no condemnation to* that man, Rom. viii. 1. Let none from henceforth "lay any thing to his charge: for it is God that justifieth; who then is he that shall condemn? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also

maketh intercession." Thus, justice, instead of barring our way to the holiest, becomes our friend, and casts open the door of access to us: for God is *just*, when he is "the justifier of them that believe in Jesus."

As for the *holiness* of God, that seems to stand as an insuperable bar in our way of entering into the holiest, by reason of the blot, defilement, and pollution of sin, which renders us utterly loathsome in the sight of the holy One of Israel. But, glory to God in the highest, this bar is also removed by the blood of Jesus; for, that moment a sinner comes under the covert of this blood, and draws near to God under this covering, he has his *heart* thereby "sprinkled from an evil conscience, and his body washed with pure water." The same moment that the righteousness of the second Adam is extended to us for justification, his Spirit enters into us for sanctification, renewing us in the whole man, after the image of God. And the blood of Jesus not only cancels the guilt of sin, which made us obnoxious to the law and justice of God; but it hides and covers the filth of sin, from the eyes of immaculate holiness. Yea, holiness is so much the sinner's friend, in drawing near through the blood of Jesus, that this attribute of the divine nature is pawned in the promise of acceptance made to Christ and his seed, Psal. lxxxix. 2, 35. On which account I may exhort all true believers, in the words of the psalmist, Psal. xxx. 4: "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." Thus then, I say, all impediments and bars on God's part, that might hinder our access into the holiest, are removed by the blood of Jesus: and therefore, *let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.*

As for impediments on our part, they may be more particularly spoken to in the application. I shall only say at the time, that the sum-total of them all amounts to this, that we are *sinners*, and so wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, that we cannot think that ever God will receive or welcome us. But at once to roll away this impediment, let it be considered, that this new and living way of access into the holiest, is only calculated for sinners: "Christ calls not the righteous," or innocent, "but sinners," to enter by him, as the way to the Father. If you were not sinners, but righteous, as Adam was before the fall, you would not need to enter *by the blood of Jesus.* But seeing the way and door to the holiest is just shaped and calculated for the sinner, let not the sinner fear to enter by it into the presence of God; especially when he calls us, who are sinners, to *draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.* "Faithful is he that hath promised" acceptance in the beloved.

CHAPTER VI.

Containing the APPLICATION *of the preceding Doctrine.*

I PROCEED now to wind up the whole of this discourse in some practical IMPROVEMENT; which I shall endeavour to manage, as briefly as I can, in the few following inferences:—

Inf. 1. From what has been said, we may see that there is a mystery in believing, which the world does not understand, yea, which none can know, without "that Spirit which is of God, whereby we know the things that are freely given to us of God." The apostle, 1 Tim. iii. 9, speaks of the "mystery of faith." And, indeed, every thing about it is a mystery. The way of its production, or the manner in which it is wrought in the soul, by the power of the eternal Spirit, is a mystery: "Who can tell how the bones are formed in the womb of her that is with child?" far less are we capable to account for the way and manner of the Spirit's operation in forming and creating us in Christ Jesus by faith. Hence is that saying of Christ to Nicodemus, John iii. 8: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." How the Spirit of God drops into the heart the incorruptible seed of his own word, and impregnates it there, so as to turn it, though in itself but a dead letter, into a living principle, purifying the heart, debasing self, and carrying the soul directly into Christ for all, is a mystery which we cannot comprehend or account for. And then the object of faith is a great mystery. God, the ultimate object of it, is an awful mystery: "Who can by searching, find him out," either in his essence, operations, or manner of his existence, one in three, and three in one? Christ, the more immediate object of faith, is a great mystery, an incarnate Deity: "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." The gospel covenant, by which we believe in Christ, is a "mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but now is made manifest to the saints." And, lastly, the actings of faith upon its objects is a great mystery; how the poor believer on earth can receive Christ in heaven, at the right hand of God: how he applies him as his own Saviour, his own Prophet, Priest, and King, upon the indefinite grant that is made of him in the new covenant, where the man is neither designated by name or surname: how faith makes use of Christ and his fulness, with as great freedom as a man makes use of meat and drink that is

set before him, on which account we are said to "eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man: how it puts on the righteousness of Christ, and glories in the obedience of another, as though the man had fulfilled the law in his own person: how it draws forth the fulness of the Godhead, dwelling bodily in Christ, and thus fills the soul with the "fulness of God:" how it will take a bare word, dropping from God's mouth, and "rejoice in it as one that findeth great spoils:" how it will take this word, and draw near to him in the new and living way, with full assurance of acceptance. These things are mysteries which flesh and blood cannot reveal; and yet to every true believer "it is given," in less or more, to "know these mysteries of the kingdom."

Inf. 2. From this doctrine we may see the excellency of the grace of faith. When it takes a view of the *blood of Jesus*, of the *new and living way*, and of the *High Priest over the house of God*, it can *draw near* to the *holiest* with *full assurance* of welcome. And it is not without warrant that faith promises itself welcome from the Lord in its approaches to him through Christ; God has made the same, yea, a much greater *grant* to the grace of faith, than Ahasuerus made to Esther, chap. ix. 12: "What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request? and it shall be done." Compare this with John xiv. 13, 14: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." So Mark xi. 24: "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." As Ahasuerus put a peculiar honour upon Esther, and preferred her above all the maids in his kingdom; so God, the King of kings, stamps a peculiar honour and excellency upon the grace of faith, preferring it above all the other graces; on which account it may say with Mary, Luke i. 48: "He hath regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden." Though God be high, yet hath he a respect unto the lowly: though he be the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, yet he dwells with the humble: he delights to choose, and put honour upon the foolish, weak, base, and despised things of this world; yea, he chooses "things which are not, to bring to naught things that are." Faith is the meanest and lowest, the poorest and most beggarly of all the other graces; for all the other graces give something to God, whereas faith, like a mere beggar, comes not to give any thing, but to get and receive all: and yet God takes this beggar, and sets it among *princes*, to allude to that expression, Psal. cxiii. 7, 8. Such honour and preferment does God put upon this grace, that though he has said, "He will not give his glory to an-

other;" yet so little jealousy has he of the grace of faith, that he, as it were, sets it upon the throne with himself, ascribing things to it, which are proper and peculiar to himself only; he sets the jewels of his crown upon the head of faith. The salvation of a lost sinner is God's prerogative; he alone is "the God of salvation, to whom belong the issues from death;" and yet we find this attributed to the grace of faith: "Thy faith hath saved thee," says Christ; go in peace. Justification is peculiar to God only. *It is God that justifieth*, says the apostle; and yet the same apostle ascribes the justification of a sinner to faith. "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." God alone is "the Lord of life," who "kills, and makes alive;" and yet life is ascribed to faith, "The just shall live by his faith." Omnipotence is God's peculiar prerogative; he is "the Almighty;" and yet there is almightiness attributed to faith, "All things are possible to him that believeth.—If" we "have faith as a grain of mustard-seed," we may "say unto this" and the other "mountain, Be thou removed, and it shall be done." If we read the 11th chapter of the Hebrews, we shall find things ascribed to faith, which nothing but Omnipotence itself could effect, such as the "stopping the mouths of lions, quenching the violence of fire, raising the dead," and the like. Now, would you know why God thus attributes works and perfections to faith, which are proper to himself alone? The plain reason is, because faith is such a low, mean, self-denied grace, that it is just the genius and nature of it to exclude self; yea, to exclude itself, to glory in the Lord alone, and to give him the glory due unto his name, saying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy name be the glory." Does faith save us? Yes, it does: but then it turns the glory of salvation over upon the author thereof; saying, "Our God is the God of salvation." Does the just man live by faith? Yes; but then faith steps in with "It is not I:" Gal. ii. 20: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Does faith justify? Yes, it does: but then its language is, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness, in him" will I "be justified, and in him" alone will I "glory." Can faith do every thing? Yea, but it is by leaning on the arm of Omnipotence. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Thus, I say, faith arrogates and claims nothing to itself, but "gives unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." And so zealous is faith to have God alone exalted, particularly the freedom of his grace in the justification and salvation of a sinner, that, though believing be the highest and greatest act of obedience that a person can yield to the moral law, yet, that boasting may be for ever excluded, it excludes and shuts

out itself from the rank and category of works, or acts of obedience, Rom. iv. 5: "To him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith" objectively considered, "is counted for righteousness." It is the peculiar excellency of faith, that it sinks its own act, that its blessed object, CHRIST, may be "all in all; it rejoices in Christ Jesus, and triumphs always in him." And though, as I was saying, it be the poorest, lowest, and most beggarly of all the other graces; yet it is a grace that prides itself in the Lord Jesus, and by his blood enters with boldness into the holiest.

Inf. 3. If it be the will of God that we should draw near with full assurance of faith; hence I infer, that unbelief, whether reigning in the wicked, or remaining in the saints, cannot shun to be most displeasing and offensive to him.

1. I say, reigning unbelief in the wicked is a flat contradiction to the will of God. The man under the power of unbelief, instead of drawing near with the assurance of faith, departs from him, through a distrust and jealousy of his grace, power, and veracity. Solomon tells us, Prov. vi. 34: "Jealousy is the rage of a man." If we shall entertain and express a jealousy or distrust of a man's veracity, it is enough to exasperate and enrage him against us: why? when we express a jealousy of him, we in effect call him a liar. And if "man who is vanity, and the son of man who is a lie," reckon it such an indignity to have their veracity or kindness called in question; how much more is it an indignity done to him, for whom it is impossible to lie? O sirs! unbelief offers the most signal affront to a God of truth, that is possible for a creature to do. God, as you were hearing, to encourage our faith and confidence toward him, has given all the securities which he could possibly grant; yea, the most jealous heart in the world could not ask better security from the most treacherous person on earth, than God has granted in his word: for though his bare word of promise be enough to command faith from all mankind, yet, beside his word, he has given his writ; beside his writ, he has given his sacred oath; beside his oath, he has given a Surety; beside a Surety, he has appended solemn seals, and ratified all by the joint testimony of the three that bear record in heaven, Father, Word, and Spirit. Now, after all these securities, to entertain a jealousy of him, as if he were not faithful to his promise of welcome and acceptance in the beloved, what else is this but to make him a liar? Faithfulness and truth are "the girdle of his loins and reins;" but unbelief does its utmost to strip him of his girdle, charging him with treachery and unfaithfulness. You would reckon it an imputation of a very high

and horrid nature, for any man to charge you with blasphemy against God; and yet I will be bold to say, every unbeliever is a blasphemer of God. Why, can there be greater blasphemy under heaven, than to make God a liar? It is indeed most certain, that God will be found true, and every man a liar: but yet the unbeliever does his utmost to make him a liar, by refusing credit to his word. And, after all, is it any wonder though a holy and jealous God be so enraged against the sin of unbelief, as to declare, that "he who believeth not, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him?" Believe it, sirs, if you continue to blaspheme God by your unbelief here, you shall have time to blaspheme him in hell with devils and damned spirits, through the endless ages of eternity: John viii. 24: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." John xv. 22: "If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin."

2. This doctrine not only condemns the reigning unbelief of the greatest part of the hearers of the gospel, but also the remaining unbelief of believers themselves. God knows how many unbelieving believers there are among us. There are very few believers, but are guilty of ten, if not twenty acts of unbelief, for one act of faith. O that I could shame even believers out of their unbelief! I shall only say that your unbelief is much more unaccountable and inexcusable than the unbelief of other men: why? God has not only given you a ground of faith, as he has given others, but he has given you the grace of faith; and not to believe in that case, is a crime of a most black and aggravated nature. If a child who is sprung out of his parent's bowels, and who is the object of his most endeared affection, should call his father that begat him a liar, would not this give a more sensible wound to the parent's heart, than if he had been so treated by any other person? This is the very case with you, believers; God has taken you into his family, given you the name of sons and daughters, and he says to you in effect, as, Jer. iii. 4: "Wilt thou not from henceforth cry unto me, My Father?" Wilt thou not from henceforth draw near to me as a Father, and as your Father in Christ with full assurance of faith? And yet, after all, to call him a liar by your unbelief, and to say, that "his promise fails for evermore," or that "he has forgotten to be gracious;" O what a deep wound may you think does this give unto the heart of your heavenly Father! The provocations of sons and daughters, particularly this provocation of unbelief, touches him in the tenderest part.

You may readily ask, Wherein does the unbelief of believers discover itself? I answer,

1*st*, It discovers itself in their frequent pleading the cause of unbelief, and that under the specious pretext of humility. O, will the man say, it would be too great a thing for the like of me to venture into the holiest; it would be presumption in me to draw near with full assurance of faith, asking peace and pardon, grace and glory; I dare not meddle with the gift of God, or take hold of his covenant; my fingers are too foul to touch such holy things. Here indeed is a fair mask and show of humility. But, sirs, It is nothing else than the devil of unbelief wrapped up in Samuel's mantle; it is a pleading the cause of unbelief, and a refusing to obey the express command of God, under a pretence that you are not fit enough for believing, that you want this and that and the other qualification: and what is this but a taint of the old Adam, a tincture of the covenant of works? Whatever carnal reason may imagine, true faith, though it be the boldest, yet it is the most humble and self-emptying thing in the world; and the more of the boldness and assurance of faith, always the more humility. And the reason of this is plain, because faith in its dealings with God, despises so much as to cast an eye upon any grace or qualification in the soul itself, excepting it be its emptiness, misery, poverty, &c., and builds its whole confidence upon a ground without itself, namely, the noble qualifications of the great High Priest over the house of God.

2*dly*, The unbelief of believers discovers itself in a faint, languid, and timorous way of believing, as if the ground they stand upon were not able to bear them. Much like a man walking upon weak ice, though he ventures his weight upon it, yet every moment he is afraid lest the ice break underneath him, and leave him in the deep. Just so is it with many believers; they venture upon Christ, upon his righteousness, and upon the faithfulness of God pledged in the promise, with a kind of erphing, as though they would fail underneath them, and leave them to perish for ever. And what else is this but unbelief, or a secret distrusting of the sufficiency of God's faithfulness, or of Christ's righteousness, to bear up the soul in its eternal concerns!

3*dly*, The unbelief of believers appears in their being too much addicted to a way of living by sense. Sense, unless it have the stock in its own hand, does not reckon the promise of God worth a farthing; but faith rejoices in the promise as its subsistence even when sense is out of doors. The believer who lives by sense will not believe the promise, or credit the veracity of the Promiser, unless he be hired and bribed with sensible consolations and manifestations; much like Thomas, John xx. 25: "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust

my hand into his side, I will not believe." It is with many believers, as it is with some unskilful swimmers; they will venture into the deep waters if you will undertake to bear their heads above, but not otherwise: but this is not true swimming; true swimming is for a man to venture the weight of his body into the water, and by the strength of the water, and the waving of his hands and limbs, to bear himself up from sinking. So true believing is not for a man to trust God and his promise only when he is borne up with sensible consolations; but for a man to rest, stay, and bear up his soul upon the bare promise of God, even when these props are withdrawn: it is to "trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay ourselves upon him as our God, when we walk in darkness, and see no light."

Inf. 4. This doctrine serves to discover what is the strength or stature of our faith; for the expression of the apostle in the text, as was already hinted, plainly imports, that there are believers of different sizes in God's family. Now, in enlarging this inference, there are two or three practical cases which I shall endeavour briefly to resolve.

1. What are the usual symptoms of a strong faith?
2. What are the usual attendants of a weak faith?
3. How may the reality of faith be known, though it were in the lowest or weakest degree?

Quest. 1. What are the signs or evidences of a strong faith?

Ans. 1. The more the legality of the heart is overcome, the stronger is a man's faith. Every man is naturally married to the law as a covenant; and while there is any thing of nature in the believer, he will find a strong bias in his heart, turning him into the works of the law, as a ground of acceptance before God. And O, how easily and insensibly do our spirits glide into this old covenant-channel, imagining that God accepts of us the better, on the score of our inherent holiness, or external acts of obedience! Now, I say, the more that this bias of the heart is conquered, the stronger is our faith. A vigorous and lively faith overlooks all graces, duties, attainments, and experiences, as grounds of acceptance; and founds its confidence wholly upon the blood of Jesus, the merit and mediation of the great high priest over the house of God, by virtue of the covenant of grace, and free promise of acceptance in him. The strong believer casts out the bond-woman, and her seed of legal works and doings, owning himself only a son of the free-woman, an heir of the promise of grace and glory, through Christ and his imputed righteousness. Upon this rock he drops his anchor, upon this foundation he builds his hope,

disclaiming his goodness as a thing that extends not to the Lord, accounting his own righteousness, whether legal or evangelical, before or after conversion, as "loss and dung, that he may be found in Christ, having the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ." He will not take so much as a stone or little pinning of the works of the law, to help up the new fabric of grace; no, it shall be all grace from top to bottom, and through every part of it, and grace reigning through imputed righteousness alone: Eph. ii. 8, 9: "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

2. Strong faith will build its confidence, as to great matters, upon a naked word coming from the mouth of Christ, even though sense and reason, yea, the ordinary course of providence, be against it. This we see exemplified in the case of Abraham, formerly mentioned, Rom. iv. Though every thing seemed to make against him, yet "he staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Yea, strong faith will catch at the least hint of encouragement from the Lord, and build its assurance thereupon, as to the desired event: Matth. viii. 5—13, the centurion comes to Christ on behalf of his servant, who was stricken with a palsy, and grievously tormented. Christ answers, ver. 7, "I will come and heal him." Well, the man's faith fixes upon this simple word of promise, and is so much assured of the good-will, power, and faithfulness of the Promiser, that he makes no more doubt of his servant's recovery, than if it were already done, being persuaded, that diseases and distempers were as much at Christ's beck, and much more, than his soldiers or servants were at his; and that Christ's word of command could as effectually heal at a distance, as though he were present: upon which, verse 10, we are told, that Jesus marvelled, saying, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

3. Strong faith is ordinarily attended with a firm and fixed resolution to hang on the Lord, till it get the errand it comes for: and no supposable discouragements shall make it quit its grasp. Jacob was a strong believer, and, by the strength of his faith, "he had power with God; yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed." We read, Gen. xxxii. after a long night's wrestling, the Lord says to him, "Let me go, for the day breaketh:" Jacob answers, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." This one would think, looked like rudeness and ill manners in Jacob, to speak so to God: no, it was not rudeness, but only the resolution of his faith. 'Lord,' might Jacob say, 'if thou ask my leave to go, I can by no means

yield to it; let the day break and pass on, let night come, and the next day break again, lame Jacob, and the living God, shall never part, till I get the blessing:' and his resolute faith, like a prince, prevailed. O let all the true seed of Jacob follow his example, and they "shall be fed with the heritage of Jacob their father." The like instance we see in the Syrophenician woman, Matth. xv. 22—28. Her faith breaks through all discouragements, yea, improves seeming discouragements as arguments to fortify her suit; whereupon Christ at length answers, "O woman, great is thy faith." Strong faith will rather die upon the spot, than quit its grasp:—"Though he slay me," says Job, "yet will I trust in him."

4. Strong faith, though it may be troubled at the hiding of the Lord's countenance, yet it will not be cast down at every cloud, as though the Lord had forgotten to be gracious: no, it presently casts its eyes on the covenant, and reads love in God's words, when it cannot see them in his looks; saying with the church, in Mic. vii. 8, 9: "Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me:—he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness." Why? He has said, and his word is sure, that "his goings forth are prepared," or secured, "as the" outgoings of the morning-light, Hos. vi. 3; and therefore I no more doubt of the Lord's return, than I doubt of the return of the sun in the morning, when he sets out of sight in the evening. However dark the night may be, yet the day will break, and the shadows will fly away: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." And, as strong faith keeps up the heart from sinking under the clouds of desertion, temptation, and inward trouble; so it keeps the spirit of a man in an equal poise, under all the vicissitudes of time, so that "he shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart being fixed, trusting in the Lord." Although the fig tree should not blossom, &c. yet will he "rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of his salvation," Hab. iii. 17, 18. Heroic faith has the moon of this world under its feet; it tramples upon all the changes of time, saying with the apostle, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," &c. However matters may be situated in the conduct of providence, yet, a lively faith can see that there are no changes in God's covenant, no change of his love or purpose of grace.

5. The more fruitful a person is in the exercise of other graces, the stronger is his faith. You know the plenty and bigness of the fruit of a tree, flows from the abundance of sap and strength in the root: so here, faith is the radical grace, the root upon which the other graces grow; and therefore, the more that a person abounds in love, hope, repentance,

meekness, humility, and other graces, the more vigorous is his faith: for as the tree strikes its roots into the ground, and from thence draws and sends a digested nourishment through the several branches, by which they are made to blossom and bring forth; so faith unites the soul to Christ, through the word of grace, and fetches out sap and strength from that true olive by which the soul is made to "revive as the corn, to grow as the vine, and the scent and savour thereof to be as the wine of Lebanon."

The *second* question was, What are the usual attendants of a weak faith? An answer to this question may easily be deduced from what has been already suggested in answer to the former; a weak faith having the opposite symptoms of a strong. However, beside what may be gathered this way, I shall suggest the two particulars following:—

1. Frequent doubting, staggering, and wavering of the heart, is a concomitant of weak faith. You know, there is a great deal of smoke goes up from the fire, while it is weak, not thoroughly broken up; so the more of the smoke of unbelieving doubts, fears, and jealousies, there is the less faith. Hence doubting and believing are opposed; "Wherefore didst thou doubt, O thou of little faith?" A staggering at the promise through unbelief is opposed to the strength of faith, Rom. iv. 20. The word is borrowed from a man walking, whose feet through weakness hit one another, which makes him alter his pace, one step is quick, and another slow: so here, the way of weak faith is not equal. Perhaps, under a sensible enjoyment, he is this hour triumphing in his high places; but anon the enjoyment is withdrawn, and he alters his pace, and staggers through unbelief, saying, "His promise fails for evermore; he hath forgotten to be gracious."

2. The more hasty and impatient the soul is under delays, the weaker is its faith. This I gather from Is. xxviii. 16: "He that believeth shall not make haste." Weak faith is so hasty, that it will allow of no time to intervene betwixt the petition and its answer, betwixt the promise and the accomplishment: If the answer do not come presently, the man is ready to conclude, "The Lord doth not hear, neither doth the God of Jacob regard." But now, strong faith makes the soul to wait God's time and leisure, saying, "I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me."

The *third* question was this, How may the truth and reality of faith be known, though it be in the weakest and lowest degree? I answer,

1. True faith, even in the weakest measure, will look on

sin as an enemy, though it perhaps dare not lay claim to Christ as a friend. True faith is said to "purify the heart," Acts xv. 9. It is a living principle in the soul, which is always opposing the motions of indwelling corruption. Although indeed, sometimes, through the prevalency of sin, it cannot be discerned, more than the living spring at the bottom of the well, when the waters are muddied; yet like the living spring, it is always working out the mud and filth, till the waters be perfectly clear. Perhaps the soul is so far from perceiving any real grace, any actual interest in Christ, that it can see nothing but atheism, enmity, unbelief, ignorance, pride, and such vermin of hell, crawling in every corner; and yet at the same time the living principle of faith at the bottom of the heart will be working and wrestling against these, sometimes by groans; "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me!" sometimes by complaints, "Iniquities prevail against me:" sometimes by looks to heaven for relief, "I know not what to do, but mine eyes are upon thee:" sometimes by cries to heaven, "I am oppressed, undertake for me:" sometimes by breathing desires after more holiness, "Create in me a clean heart; Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" By such things, the truth and reality of faith may be discovered, even in its weakest measure and degree.

2. True faith, though ever so weak, will have a high estimate and valuation of Christ, and the habitual bent and bias of the soul will be toward him, 1 Pet. ii. 7: "Unto you which believe, he is precious." Is. xxvi. 8: "The desire of our soul is to thy name and to the remembrance of thee." Weak faith, perhaps, dare not go the length of saying with the spouse, "My beloved is mine, and I am his:" yet it will be often saying, O that he were mine! "O that thou wert as my brother that sucked the breasts of my mother!" And if it could get out its breath, it would even cry, "Abba, Father; My Lord, and my God:" but it is, as it were, suppressed and smothered, when it would say so, with prevailing unbelief. Where true faith is, there is a void, emptiness, and restlessness of the soul, like the fish out of its element, or a bone out of joint, till some view of Christ come, and then, indeed, it returns unto its rest. I remember, after the creation of Adam, God caused all the creatures to pass before him: but among them all there was not found a help meet for him: there was something disagreeable and unsatisfying in all the inferior creatures; so that though he had them all at his command, yet still man was in a solitary condition, Gen. ii. 20. But so soon as ever the woman was presented to him, he says, ver. 23, "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh;"

this indeed is a help meet for me. Just so is it with the soul in whom there is a principle of true faith: present riches, profits, pleasures, and all worldly contentments to him, he still finds something unsuitable and unsavoury in them all; but let Christ be revealed to him, immediately he cries out, O this is a help meet for me indeed! Is. xi. 10: "To him shall the Gentiles seek, for his rest is glorious." Psal. lxxiii. 25: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

3. True faith, though in the lowest degree, will not rest there, but breathes after higher degrees of faith. Set the highest degree of faith before a weak believer, tell him of the faith of Abraham, how he believed without staggering; the man will indeed be humbled under a sense of his short-comings, and lament his own unbelief; yet, at the same time, he will find a breathing, and eager desire in his soul to win such a length of believing. Thus, like Paul, he "forgets those things which are behind, and reacheth forth unto those things which are before," &c. When the weak believer hears of the full assurance of faith, his language is, "Lord, help my unbelief; Lord, increase my faith." I might tell you of many other evidences of faith in its truth and reality, though weak, as, that it works by love; it empties the soul, and humbles it; though the man cannot see himself great in God's eyes, yet he sees himself nothing in his own eyes; as he values Christ highly, so he values himself less than the least of all God's mercies. But I do not insist.

Inf. 5. Is it the will of God that we should draw near to him in Christ, with full assurance of faith? then let us study to do the will of God in this matter. Seeing the *door* of the holiest is *open*, the "way consecrated for us," and the "High Priest entered within the veil; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." I exhort you not only to "believe," but to be "strong in the faith." Study to have a faith proportioned, in some measure, to the grounds of faith already mentioned.

But here a question will readily be moved, Is it the duty of all the hearers of the gospel, at first to believe after this manner, or to draw near with a full assurance of faith? For answer,

1. I grant, that the first approaches of a sinner to God in Christ by faith, are for the most part weak and feeble, attended with much fear and trembling, through the prevalence and strength of unbelief, a sense of utter unworthiness, and awful impressions of the glorious majesty of God; all which readily makes him, with the publican, to "stand afar off, smiting on his breast, crying, God be merciful to me a sinner." But yet,

2. I affirm, that there is a sufficient ground laid, in the gospel revelation and promise, for a sinner, even in his first approach to God in Christ, to come with full assurance of faith. This will evidently appear, if we consider, that by the glorious gospel, a wide door of access is cast open to all without exception; all grounds of unbelief and distrust are removed, every bar and impediment which might make them to halt and hesitate is rolled away. This is given in commission to ministers, to "prepare the way of the people, to cast up, cast up the high-way, to gather out the stones, and lift up a standard for the people," Is. lxii. 10. When we call sinners to believe, we do not call them to come with a weak faith, or with a doubting, disputing faith; but we invite and call them to come with assurance of acceptance and welcome, grounded upon his infallible word of promise; "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

3. I find the Lord directing sinners, even in their first approaches, to draw near to him in Christ, with full assurance of faith, Jer. iii. 19: "But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?" Here is a very puzzling question, such as none can answer but God himself. Well, but what is the answer which the Lord puts in the sinner's mouth? "Thou shalt call me, My Father, and shalt not turn away from me." The first breath of the Spirit of adoption is, *Abba, Father*, Rom. viii. 15; a word of faith or confidence. Christ puts words of assurance in our mouths, teaching us, when we pray, to say, "Our Father which art in heaven." And every one apart is to say, "My Father which art in heaven," &c. Agreeably to which is the direction given, Jam. i. 6. We are told, verse 5, that "if any man" (be he a saint, or a sinner) "lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Well, here is noble encouragement to all; but they who would speed well, are ordered to come in the full assurance of faith, verse 6: "But then let him ask in faith, nothing wavering," &c.

4. I find sinners in their first approaches, sometimes practising this direction, and coming with words of assurance, Jer. iii. 22, says the Lord, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." And what is the first echo of faith to this call? "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." So Zech. xiii. 9; "I will say, It is my people;" there is the word of grace, and ground of faith: and the language of faith, correspondent to it, immediately follows; "They shall say, the Lord is my God." Is. xlv. 24: "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness

and strength." Besides all this, none, I think, can doubt, but it is the sinner's duty, at first, in obedience to the first commandment, to know and acknowledge the Lord as God, and as our God; and how this can be done but by believing, I cannot tell.

Well, then, seeing there is such a door of faith opened to sinners in the gospel, let sinners enter in with boldness, and be saved: John x. 9: "I am the door," says Christ: "by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

Object. 1. May the sinner say, How shall I venture to draw near with assurance of acceptance? I have such a burden of sin and guilt lying upon me, and it has such a prevalency and ascendant over me, that my confidence is quite marred: for my part, I may well say with David, Psal. xl. 12, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me." To this I answer, (1.) By way of concession that it is indeed impossible for a person living in the love and practice of sin, to draw near to God with the confidence of faith; for in the very act of drawing near, the *heart* is *purified by faith*, in the blood of Jesus; or, as it is expressed in the latter clause of the text, he has his "heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and *his* body washed with pure water." In believing we "cease to do evil, and learn to do well." Faith, apprehending the mercy of God in Christ, turns the soul from sin to God. So that it is as impossible for a person to draw near to God with the confidence of faith, while he lives in the love and practice of sin, as it is for a person to come to you, and go from you, at the same instant of time. While the heart is in league with sin, it is departing from the Lord: how then in this case can the sinner draw near to God? far less can he draw near with assurance of acceptance. There is a great difference betwixt iniquity *prevailing* in the heart, and iniquity *regarded* in the heart. In the last case, a person cannot draw near with acceptance: Psal. lxvi. 18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart: the Lord will not hear me." As if he had said, If I love it, or give it kindly harbour in my heart, God will not accept of me, or my prayers; because in that case he could not draw near with a *true heart*, which is an inseparable concomitant of the assurance of faith. But in the former case, namely, of prevailing iniquity, it is not only possible, but actually precedented, for a person to draw near with the full assurance of faith; as we see in the instance of David, Psal. lxv. 3: "Iniquities," says he, "prevail against me." But what follows? "As for our trangressions, thou shalt

purge them away." Now, this being the case pointed at in the objection, it ought to be no prejudice or hinderance to your drawing near to the holiest by the blood of Jesus, with full assurance of faith, seeing he is faithful who hath promised acceptance in the beloved. (2.) Whereas, O sinner, thou complainest of a burden of sin and guilt lying upon thee, which mars thy confidence; I only ask, For whom thinkest thou, was the way to the holiest opened by the blood of Jesus? was it for the righteous, or for guilty sinners? An innocent or holy person needs no such way of access: it is only calculated and shapen for the guilty criminal and transgressor, such as thou art; and "though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," that moment thou enterest in by the blood of Jesus: and therefore, *let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.* Whither can a guilty sinner go, but to the Lord pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin? Whither can a polluted sinner go, save to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness? (3.) The boldness and assurance of faith is not only consistent, but is always accompanied with a soul-abasing sense of utter unworthiness, because of the guilt, and filth, and power of sin. And the reason of this is plain, because, in believing, the man, through an uptaking of sin and guilt, is carried out of himself to seek his standing and the ground of his confidence in another, even in Christ, and the mercy of God in him. So David, Psal. cxxx. 3, 4: "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared," &c. And therefore, let a sense of sin, in its guilt and prevalence, carry thee out of thyself, to draw near, by the blood of Jesus, with full assurance of faith. It was a preposterous way of reasoning in Peter, to say, "Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man." He should rather have said, 'Lord, come to me, for I am a sinful man;' for where can a sinner be better than with the Saviour of sinners?

Object. 2. You call us to draw near with the assurance of faith; but, alas! how can I do this, seeing I am in the dark about my interest in Christ? If I knew that I had peace with God, my sin pardoned, my person accepted, and that I were in a state of grace and favour, in that case I could draw near with confidence indeed. But the case is quite otherwise: clouds and darkness are round about me; I doubt if ever God dealt with my heart effectually by his grace: How, then, can I draw near with the confidence of faith? *Answ.* If you never draw near to God with the assurance of faith, till you come to a sensible assurance of your interest in Christ, and of your being in a state of grace, you will never

draw near to him in your life: and the reason of this is, because a sensible assurance of an interest in Christ, is the fruit and effect of the soul's drawing near by faith; and the effect can never go before its cause. The way to come at that assurance of a state of grace, is to draw near with the assurance of faith, grounded, not upon any gracious work within you, but upon the gracious promise of God in his word, and the mediation of the great High Priest over the house of God: Heb. iv. 14, 16: "Seeing we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God,—let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace," &c. Faith (as I said just now) still seeks a ground of confidence, not in grace received, or any thing within the man, but only in Christ, and the gracious promise of acceptance through him; and therefore, the best way in the world to rise above all these doubts, fears, and perplexities respecting your gracious state, is, by a direct act of faith, to go to God by the new and living way, assuring and persuading your own souls, that a God of grace and love "hates putting away," Is. l. 10. He that "walketh in darkness, and hath no light," what course is he to take? "Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God:" where, by the *name of the Lord*, we are to understand the grace and mercy, power and faithfulness, of God, pledged in the promises of the covenant. Here we are to cast anchor; upon these we are to build the confidence and assurance of faith, when we have nothing to look or trust to. Faith, both in its first act, and in its after-actings, fastens upon this name of the Lord: when at first it fetches the soul out of the darkness of a natural state, and when afterwards, by its renewed actings, it brings the soul from under the dark and black clouds of desertion, temptation, and despondency, it still trusts in the name of God, as it is set in Christ, and set forth in the covenant, particularly in the absolute promises of it. And therefore, though indeed, in the duty of self-examination, we are to look inward for the marks and evidences of grace, in order to our arriving at an assurance of sense: yet, in the duty of believing, and in order to our coming at the assurance of faith, we must look wholly outward to the promise, and the name of God pledged therein. Thus did Abraham, the father of the faithful, Rom. iv. 20, 21; and so must we, if we would be the true seed of Abraham.

Object. 3. You call sinners to believe, and to believe with an assured faith: But to what purpose is all this? may one say: faith is "the gift of God," the work of his Spirit; I have no power to believe, till God work it in me; and therefore all this labour, in persuading us to believe, might be spared.

I answer, Your own inability to believe, by any strength or power of yours, is so far from being an argument against, that it is one of the strongest arguments why you should believe: for when we call you to believe, we do not call you to work or do any thing by your own power; but, because you have no power, to trust in the doings and strength of another, who, as he has wrought all your works *for you*, so he engages himself by promise, to work all your works "in you;" and particularly, being "the Author and Finisher of faith," is ready and willing to "fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." Every creature answers its name; and will God be wanting to answer his? No, surely; the name that he takes to himself is declarative of his nature: and therefore, since he has taken this name to himself, of being the "Author of Faith," and the "Finisher" thereof, we may, with the greatest assurance of faith, "trust in *this* name of the Lord," that he will both begin the good work, and carry it on to the day of the Lord Jesus. And this very committing of the work of faith to him, from a sense of your own inability, is that believing which we urge and call you to. Faith is a grace which just springs out of the ruin of all self-sufficiency and excellency; finding neither righteousness nor strength within, it looks abroad, and cries, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

Unbelief and carnal reason are ready to argue, Because God by his Spirit must do all, therefore we will sit still and do nothing. But the Spirit of God, whose reasonings I am sure are infinitely better, argues after a quite different manner, Phil. ii. 12, 13: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." O what glorious encouragement is here for a poor impotent sinner to essay and endeavour at believing! Here is the arm of Omnipotence, reaching forth for thy help and through-bearing in the work he calls thee to. Up, therefore, and be doing; for "thy God commands thy strength;" and therefore let him be "the glory of thy strength."

But, say you, seeing we cannot *work* the work of faith, why does he yet *command* it? Is it not a hardship to require of us what we have no ability to do? *Answ.* Why do you send your little children to school with the A, B, C, in their hands, before they can read one letter? You do not think it a hardship to put the book in their hand, and bid them read, though they know not a letter, because you offer to teach them yourself, or by another in your place. So here, we are commanded to "work the work of God;" which is to "believe on him whom he hath sent;" which yet is no

hardship, notwithstanding of utter inability for it in ourselves; because, at the same time that he commands believing, he tells us, for our encouragement, that he himself is the Author of faith, and is ready to work in us both to will and to do. If a master should command a servant to poise or lift a burden which he is not able to move, or to work a turn which he has no skill to manage; it might indeed discourage the servant from attempting it, if he were required to do it by his own strength or skill; but when the master tells him, I will assist, I will direct, I will do all, only put to thy hand, what servant would refuse or decline the service in this case? or if he should, do you not think he would deserve to be beaten with many stripes? The application is obvious: It is God's ordinary way to come and join with the poor soul, and enable it to believe, while, in obedience to his command, it is endeavouring to believe in Christ. Like a kind master of a school, when the child, in obedience to him, takes the pen in his hand, and scribbles the best way he can, the master takes his hand in his, and leads and learns him to write: so, when we take, as it were, the pen in our hand, and offer to write, at his command, he takes our hand in his, directing, strengthening, and enabling us to believe: so that, if there be but a willing mind to this work, it is accepted: where he gives to will, he will also give to do, of his good pleasure; these two are inseparably connected in the order of God's covenant.

But you may still object, All the endeavours of a natural man are still but natural and sinful actions; and will ever God concur by his almighty power with the acts or endeavours of nature. *Answ.* Although God be not obliged to concur with the endeavours of nature; yet, such is his grace, love, and good-will, towards man upon earth, such is the strength of his desire after our salvation, such pleasure has he in a sinner's believing, such a regard has he to what he himself has commanded, that we find him many times actually concurring with the poor helpless sinner, in his impotent efforts at obedience to what he calls for. It was no gracious principle that moved Naaman the Syrian to go wash in the waters of Jordan; yet, because he did what was commanded, God was pleased to concur with the mean of his own appointment, and cured his leprous body, and, for aught I know, his soul also. Let us believe as we can, in obedience to God's command, and, in dependence upon his almighty power; and while we are doing so, although the act be at the beginning but natural, yet, in the very acting, promised and purchased grace strikes in, and turns it into a supernatural act of believing. As when Christ was about to work that famous miracle at Cana, in Galilee, he does not first turn the water

into wine; but he first bids them pour out the water, and, in pouring of it out, the water was changed into wine: so the loaves were multiplied, while the disciples, in obedience to the command of Christ, were dividing them among the multitude. Just so here, while the poor soul, in a subordination to the divine power, and, in obedience to the divine command, is attempting to believe, a God of grace changes the attempt into a true genuine faith; so that the soul, through the mighty power of God, ere ever it is aware, is brought really to believe, and that in a way it knows not how: for "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Thus, I say, in the very acting of faith we are enabled to act it; when we take the pen in our hand, God takes us by the hand, and writes for us, leading us in the "way we know not." It is with us in believing, many times, as in praying. The man goes to prayer with his heart as cold as the ice, and as hard as the nether millstone; he cannot open his mouth before the Lord; his tongue is tacked, his heart is locked up: but yet, while the poor soul is striving to pour out its heart into God's bosom, the Spirit of the Lord falls on him, even the Spirit of grace and supplication, by which his bonds are loosed, and his soul made like the chariots of Amminadib. So, while the poor soul is striving at believing, the Spirit of faith comes and concurs with it, exerting that exceeding great and mighty power which raised Christ from the dead, by which he comes to be "filled with joy and peace in believing."

Perhaps you may say, 'You urge us much to essay believing; but pray give us your best advice how to manage in this matter.' O that the Spirit of God may concur! There are these two or three things I offer, by way of advice, to you who are in good earnest; and, O! what man is there, that has a soul to be saved, and who looks forward to a vast eternity of well or wo, that should not be in good earnest as to this matter!

1. My *first* advice, then, is this, Study to have your hearts well stored with all these considerations, which are fit fuel and matter by which faith is generated, or begotten, in the hearts of sinners. Although the act of saving faith be the effect of the divine power and grace; yet it is in the power of nature, by a common concourse, to stock and store the mind with these things which are the seed of faith. The husbandman, though he cannot make one grain of corn grow, yet he can plough and sow his ground; and when he has done his part, he leaves the seed under the clod, and looks up to

heaven for the waterings of the earlier and latter rains; and accordingly, God ordinarily crowns his endeavours with success, making the heavens to hear the earth, and the earth to hear the corn, whereby it brings forth ten, twenty, or a hundred fold. So here, let us do what is incumbent on us, and what we have power in an ordinary way to do; let us sow the seeds, I mean, let us store our minds with the pure and precious truths of God, and acquaint ourselves with these things which are to be believed, as they are laid before us in the holy oracles of the scriptures of truth; and having thus laid in the seed into the ground or soil of our hearts, let us look heavenward, and wait for a shower of the Spirit's influences, according to that word of grace or promise, Isa. xliv. 3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." You know, they that offered sacrifices of old, though they could not make fire come down from heaven to consume their sacrifices; yet they could fetch the bullock out of the stall, or the lamb out of the fold; they could bring it to the altar, and bind it with cords to the horns of the altar; they could gather their sticks, and lay in proper fuel; and having done their part, they looked up to heaven for the celestial fire to set all on a flame together. In like manner, I say, do what is incumbent on you; gather your sticks, lay in the proper fuel of faith, store your minds with the materials of believing, which you are daily reading or hearing in the word. Study to impress your souls with the doctrines of your lost estate in the first Adam, and the way of your salvation by grace, in and through the second Adam, Jesus Christ. Think upon the near approach that the high and lofty One has made to us in the person of his eternal Son, by his manifestation in our nature, when he passed by the nature of angels. O think on the excellency of his person, as he is Immanuel, God-man, God with us, God on our side, to bruise the head of the old serpent, who had spoiled and ruined us. Think upon his suretyship and substitution in our room; how he was "made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" how he was "made a curse for us, that we might be redeemed from the curse;" how he was "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." Think upon the fulness of grace and truth, of merit and Spirit, that is in him; and how all that fulness of grace that is laid up in him, is laid out to us in a covenant of grace and promise, and that promise or covenant left to us, and put in our hands, and we required to take hold of it, to make use of it in a way of believing. These are some of the materials of faith; faith comes by hearing of these things, and by thinking and meditating upon

them: "By these things do men live; and in all these things is the life of our spirits," Isa. xxxviii. 16. And, therefore, revolve them in your minds, roll them like a sweet morsel under your tongues, think and think again upon them, and, in thinking, present them to your understanding, as things in which your eternal state is concerned. You have as good ground to expect the concurring power of the Spirit of faith in this way and method, to fulfil in you the work of faith with power, as ever they of old had to look for the celestial fire to come down and consume their sacrifices, as a testimony of the divine acceptance, when they had, according to the command of God, done what was incumbent on them, in preparing their materials.

2. Another advice I give you is this: Study not only to gather these materials of faith, but to be fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of every thing that God has revealed in his word, especially of those things which relate more immediately to the mystery of salvation through Christ. We must needs believe the report of the gospel, and set our seal to the record of God, in his word. Particularly, be fully persuaded that you are bankrupt, ruined, and lost, to all intents and purposes, by the breach of the first covenant, being under the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and the power of Satan; and that you have no more power to relieve yourselves out of this miserable condition, than the new-born infant cast out into the open field, Ezek. xvi. And in digging into the rock whence you were hewn, be not afraid to go to the bottom, I mean, to know the worst of yourselves; for true faith springs out of the ruin of self. Despair and self-loathing make way for a suitable prizing and improving of the blessed remedy. Want of necessaries at home obliges men to go abroad, either to beg or buy where they may have them. The denial of self, in point of righteousness and strength, lands the soul in Christ, saying, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Again, study to be fully assured, that there is no help or relief for you out of your lost condition, but only by faith's acceptance and application of Christ, upon the warrant of God's word of grace; there is no coming to the Father but by him, no other name whereby men can be saved; every other door of access is barred and condemned since the fall. Be convinced of Christ's ability and sufficiency to save you from sin, and all its dismal train of miseries: he is a mighty Redeemer, on whom God has laid our help, able to save to the very uttermost. Be persuaded, that he is a Saviour every way calculated and suited to thy necessity; being made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and that his office as a Sa-

viour, as well as his own promise, obliges him to save every one that comes to him in a way of believing: that everlasting life is yours, and you actually have it, that moment you receive him as the free gift of God; "he that hath the Son hath life:" that there is no condition or qualification, no work or duty, required in the word of God, in order to procure a right and title to eternal life; but that you are to come in upon Christ's title, who is the righteous heir, and who has made a disposition or assignment of his right to us in his testament, without any clogs or conditions. And if you venture to make your works, duties, or any good thing in you, the condition of Christ's latter-will, you alter the will of the dead; you in effect destroy the freedom of a covenant of grace, and build up a partition-wall between Christ and you, which you shall never be able to climb over.

3. Another advice I give you, is this, Believe that it is your duty to believe, in obedience to the express command of God, with an eye to his promised Spirit. First view the grounds that your faith has to go upon, already spoken to; and then cast your eye upon the divine command and call, warranting, encouraging, and requiring, you to venture upon these grounds; and so long as these are kept in view, there is no fear of presumption; how can it be presumption to obey the express command of Heaven? yea, the greatest command that ever was issued out to man from the throne of glory above, 1 John iii. 23. He speaks as if there were no other command in the word of God; because we fulfil the whole law as a covenant, in the very first act of believing, by renouncing our own, and submitting to the law-abiding and law-magnifying righteousness of the Son of God; and thereby our personal obedience also to the law as a rule, is set upon such a footing as to be "accepted in the beloved," for let us do what we will, we shall never please God, or be accepted of him, till we believe in the name of his Son, Heb. xi. 6. And therefore I say again, strive at believing, in obedience to the command of God. It is as much your duty to believe, as to obey any command of the moral law; and disobedience to this command of believing, will damn you eternally, yea, do it more effectually than murder, adultery, theft, or any other breach of the law that I can name. Pray tell me, sirs, why do you ever bow a knee, or open a mouth to God, in prayer? Do you set about this duty, because you have power and strength in yourself to pierce heaven by your prayers, or to order your cause before God? No, surely, but because God has commanded you to call upon him, therefore, powerless as you are, though you know not how to pray, or what to pray for, yet you essay it. Now, why do you not the same in the case of believing, as in

praying, since the one is commanded as well as the other? for I say, you have as little power in yourselves to pray aright as to believe aright. There are many who, as I was saying before, shift off the great duty of believing from day to day, under this pretext, that they want power to believe. But this is an objection that militates against all duties, as well as that of believing. We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, as the apostle assures us; but will you, for this reason desist from any essay to think upon what is good and benficial to your souls? No; we try meditation, we endeavour to think on what is good, and, in musing the fire burns: God comes in with the breathings of his Spirit, and then our meditations of him are sweet, and we are glad in the Lord. So, while the soul, from a sense of its lost state, is trying to roll and rest itself on Christ, in obedience to the command of God, God comes in with his Spirit of faith, and fills us with joy and peace in believing.

4. Although you should not find any sensible concurrence of the power of God coming along with your endeavours at obedience to the command of believing, yet give it not over, but still continue the attempt: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." *Object.* I have often attempted to believe, but yet I am as far from it as ever; the power of God does not come along; and therefore I may quite give it over. For answer, I refer you to a word, Heb. x. 36, 37: "Ye have need of patience; that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." In trying to act faith in obedience to the divine command ye have need of patience; for "he that believeth doth not make haste." You must resolve to believe, and wait, and wait, and believe, and never give it over: and when you have done the will of God in this matter, as you can, you must hold on with them that have clean hands, even though you find no sensible influence concurring; for it is the command of God in his word, and not the influence of the Spirit, that is the rule and measure of your duty. And if you continue doing the will of God in this matter, with an eye to him who is the author and finisher of faith, you may assure yourselves, that "in a little while, he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." It is the "will of God," and the "work of God," at which thou art aiming, even to "believe in him whom he hath sent;" and will not a God of grace and love, with "whom compassions flow," put his hand to his own work, and help a poor creature to do what is his own will? yea, surely, thou mayst be "confident of

this very thing," when he has passed his word for it, that he will "work in thee, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." There is nothing in all the world so pleasing to God, as to see a poor soul aiming to close with, and accept of his Christ: he is, as it were, pained at the heart, when sinners are backward to believe in his Son; and will he not then be forward to help a poor soul that is aiming at it? You know, an indulgent mother, when her breasts are full and swelled with milk, will be ready, not only to draw out her breast, but to help her poor infant toward it, when in want of milk or trying to suck. Has a mother such compassion toward her sucking child; and is there not infinitely more compassion with the Father of mercies, toward a poor soul that is trying to suck the full breasts of his grace and mercy drawn out to all in a gospel dispensation? He whose bowels are sending out a sound after sinners in the gospel call, will not be wanting to lend his helping hand to enable you to believe; and therefore say with David, Psal. xlii. 5, "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

Object. I have tried believing so long and so often, that I am quite wearied, my strength is gone, and yet no power from above; what shall I do? God takes no notice of me. *Answ.* Is. xl. 27, 28, &c. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength." Thou imaginest that God's helping hand is withdrawn, and that he takes no notice of thy endeavours to believe. But why sayest thou so? He is nearer than thou apprehendest: Behold he standeth behind our wall, ready to give grace, and mercy to help in time of need, ready to give power to the faint, and strength to them that have no might: and power from on high to believe is nearest, when we are most carried out of ourselves in point of strength and sufficiency. And therefore give it not over: "Wait, I say, on the Lord; for they that wait upon him shall renew their strength." It is only the weak man that will lean to the help of another: now, faith is leaning on Christ when we cannot stand alone, Cant. viii. 5: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" It is only the wearied man that will sit down and rest: now, faith is the soul's resting in or upon Christ, Psal. xxxvii. 7: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." Heb. iv. 3: "We which have believed do

enter into rest." When a man can do nothing else, when he is so feeble that he cannot put his hand to a turn, yet he can rest: so here, because thou art weak, and without strength for any work of the law, therefore the Lord calls thee to rest thy weary, sinking soul upon the Lord Jesus, on whom he has laid thy help. And therefore let thy weakness encourage thee to revive, instead of discouraging thee.

But now, I come to offer a word of exhortation to those whose hearts fall in with the foregoing exhortation. "Do ye now believe," though in the weakest degree? Let me exhort you not to rest in a low measure of faith, but press after the highest degree of it. Forget things behind, reach forth unto things that are before; believe better than ye have yet done. Go on from faith to faith, and thus learn to *draw near with a true heart, in* FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH: and thus you shall be the children of faithful Abraham, who "staggered not at the promise through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform." You see what was the ground of Abraham's faith, by which he believed without staggering; it was nothing else than the promise of life and salvation, through a Messiah to come. Well, you have the very same ground of faith laid before you, with a far greater advantage now under the New Testament; namely, the promise of acceptance, peace, pardon, grace and glory, through a Messiah who is already come, and finished the work which the Father gave him to do; and therefore believe without staggering, as he did.

That I may quicken you to press after a higher measure of faith, I offer the following considerations:—

1. Little faith is not easily discerned; it is but like a grain of mustard seed lying in the ground, which one can scarce distinguish from the dust which lies under his feet; and when faith is not discerned, God loses the glory of his own grace, and you also lose the comfort of it.

2. The world we live in requires a strong faith. It is a den of lions, and a mountain of leopards; the roaring lion is going about seeking to devour. Red seas and Jordans of trouble lie in our way to Canaan, through the howling wilderness. Storms and tempests of persecution and tribulation may blow, which will make the strong believer to stagger and shake: and if so, has not the weak believer reason to fortify himself, by studying to believe better than he has done? for it is by faith that we stand in an evil day.

3. Contentment with little faith, is no good sign of the reality of faith; for (as was hinted before) it is of the nature of true grace, to breathe after its own perfection. They who have

the least degree of it, press after the highest. They that know the Lord, follow on to know him.

4. Consider the advantages of a strong faith, beyond a weak, 1*st*, A strong faith has a firm and solid peace coming along with it: Is. xxvi. 3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." But weak faith has its peace disturbed at every turn of providence. 2*dly*, Strong faith brings great joy with it; hence we are said to be "filled with joy and peace in believing;" yea, the joy of a lively faith is a joy unspeakable, and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8.—But now the weak believer, though he may perhaps sometimes be filled with the joy of sense, yet he has but little of the joy of believing. Hence it is, that whenever sense is withdrawn, he is in the very suburbs of hell, crying, "The Lord hath forgotten to be gracious, his promise fails for evermore. 3*dly*, strong faith is more steady in a storm than a weak faith is. Strong faith, when the storm blows, casts out the anchor of hope, and rides in safety, crying, "I will not be afraid, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, and though the waters thereof roar." But now, weak faith, like Peter walking on the waters, is ready at every billow to cry out, "Master, I perish." When created comforts fail, when the fields yield no increase, weak faith is ready to say, I and my family will perish: but strong faith will say, Up the heart, there is no fear; "my bread shall be given me, my water shall be sure;" because a God of truth has said it, whose is the "earth, and the fulness thereof." He that "feeds the ravens," will not let his children starve; he that "clothes the lilies," will not let me go naked. 4*thly*, Strong faith has more confidence and boldness in entering into the holiest, more moyen and interest in heaven, than weak faith has, John xiv. 13, 14; Mark xi. 24; James i. 6. Weak faith, although God will not reject its suit, yet its returns are not so clear and full; yea, I will venture to say, that unbelieving doubts, and fears, and jealousies, mar the success of many a good petition. 5*thly*, Strong faith makes the approaches of death more easy than they are to the weak believer. Strong faith takes up the telescope of the promise, and looks beyond death, to the land afar off, and rejoices in the hope of the glory of God, saying, as the head Christ did, Psal. xvi. 9, "My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope:" for he hath "showed me the path of life," the new and living way to those "rivers of pleasures," and that "fulness of joy," which are "at God's right hand for evermore." Strong faith, viewing an exalted Redeemer, sees death and hell among the trophies of his victory, and thereupon triumphs over it as a

vanquished and slain enemy, saying, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory, through Jesus Christ my Lord." But now, weak faith shivers and trembles at the approaches of death, lest it should be swallowed up in the swellings of that Jordan. Let these considerations, I say, quicken you to breathe after the increase of your weak faith, that you may draw near with full assurance of faith.

I conclude this whole discourse with a word, 1. of encouragement; and, 2. of advice, to weak believers: for our glorious Master has commanded us, to "strengthen the weak hands, to confirm the feeble knees;" and to "say to them that are of a fearful spirit, Be strong, fear not."

1. A word of comfort and encouragement to the poor tender lambs and weaklings in God's flock, who are frequently halting and staggering, through the prevalence of unbelief.

(1.) Know, for thy comfort, that the weakest believer is as nearly related to God as a Father, as the strongest believer is. The weakest and youngest babe in a family is as dear to the father as the first-born, or the son who is come to his full strength and stature. Every branch of a tree is not alike strong or big; and yet the tenderest twig is as really united to the root, and as really partakes of the sap of the root, as the strongest and principal branch. So, here, the weakest believer is in Christ, and partakes of his Spirit, as well as the strongest.

(2.) The weak believer is clothed with the white raiment of Christ's righteousness, and is as much justified by it, as the strongest. Our great High Priest is clothed with a garment down to his feet, by which every member of his body mystical is equally covered. It is equally true of every believer, that "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ," Rom. viii. 1.

(3.) The least and weakest degree of faith shall hold out to the end. They are all "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; where the good work is begun, his faithfulness is engaged to carry it on to the day of Christ. The weakest degree of faith has glory and salvation knit to it by God's promise, as well as the strongest: It is not, "He that believeth *strongly* shall be saved;" but, "He that believeth" indefinitely, whether his faith be weak or strong.

(4.) Our blessed Redeemer for ordinary vents his affection in a more tender and sensible manner toward weak believers, than toward the strong. The good Shepherd of Israel "car-

ries the lambs in his bosom, and gently leads them that are with young." Hence it comes, that weak believers have commonly more sensible ravishing joys and consolations than strong believers. Much like a wise and affectionate parent, who will take his young infant on his knee, dandle it, and hug it in his bosom, while he will not allow his affections to run out after such a manner toward his son of age and stature, for that were to make a fool of him.

May the poor weak believer say, These are strong consolations indeed, if I might lay claim to them: but that is what I still fear, that I have no faith at all, no, not like a grain of mustard seed. Beside what was said on this in the former part of the discourse, I shall only ask these two questions: 1*st*, Does not thy heart throb and faint within thee, when thou thinkest of a parting with the Lord Jesus? If so, this says, that his love is shed abroad in thy heart by the Holy Ghost; and consequently a root and principle of faith, from whence it flows, cleaving to the Lord like the iron touched with the loadstone. And I tell thee good news, that as thou hatest to be put away from him, so "he hates putting away;" and therefore there never shall be a separation. 2*dly*. Dost thou not find a restlessness in thy spirit, an uneasiness in thy bosom, when the Lord withdraws, like a bone out of joint, or a fish out of its element? If so, the root of faith is within; Christ has been with thee in a way of grace and love, otherwise thou couldst not distinguish between absence and presence. And if ever Christ made thee a visit, his first visit shall not be his last; for "his goings forth are prepared," or secured "like the morning."

2. I come to shut up all with a few advices to weak believers, in order to the increase of their faith toward a full assurance.

(1.) Be humbled under a sense of remaining unbelief, and the weakness of your faith; for "the Lord giveth grace (and more grace) to the humble." The more that self is pulled down, the higher is Christ exalted in a way of believing.

(2.) Be greedy of more faith. Covetousness in the things of this world is idolatry: but this is among the best things, which you are allowed earnestly to covet; and the more you covet and desire of the Spirit of faith, the more you shall get; for "he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

(3.) Be well acquainted with the grounds of faith, as they are laid in the gospel revelation, some of which I have pointed at in the preceding discourse. I am persuaded, that one

great reason why so many do not believe at all, and why the faith of many real believers remains so weak, is their unacquaintedness with the strong and sure grounds that their faith has to build upon. Weak, timorous believers, fixed upon the foundation God has laid in Zion, are just like a man standing on a firm immoveable rock, his head turns giddy, and he imagines that the rock is turning upside down with him, while the failure is not in the rock, but in his own head. Our faith fails us, through our unacquaintedness with the stability of God's covenant and promise. And, therefore, I say, study to be better acquainted with the promise and faithfulness, power and love, of the Promiser.

(4.) If you would have weak faith increased and strengthened, then be frequently exercising any weak faith you have; for gracious as well as natural habits are increased and improved by repeated acts: "To him that hath," and improves well what he hath, "shall be given." This is the way to have your mite turned into a talent; and your talent of faith, by frequent exercise, shall, in due time, become as ten talents.

(5.) When you get any sensible experiences of the Lord's love, improve them, not as the grounds of your faith, but as encouragements to go on in trusting and believing, upon the grounds of faith laid before you in the word. These sensible tastes of the Lord's loving kindness are given you, not that you should dote upon the sweetness of them, but to encourage and farther you in trusting and believing: Psal. xxxvi. 7: "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore, the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." It is a common fault among many believers in our day, when they find any thing of sensible presence, then, indeed, they rejoice, and they have good reason so to do; but no sooner doth a cloud come, but their faith, as well as their joy, vanishes, and they have as little trust to put in the word and promise of the God of their life, when his back is turned, or he out of their sight, as though they never had received a kindness at his hand. And this is a reason, I am convinced, why it fares so ill with many of us at this day; and, therefore, let us amend it. And what comfort and joy we find in his presence, let it encourage and engage us to trust, and hope, and wait, and believe in him, when absent to our sense. And if we thus improve the marks of grace and consolations of his Spirit, the joy of the Lord shall be our strength; and our path shall be indeed "as the path of the just, and as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

SERMON XII.

GOD IN CHRIST, A GOD OF LOVE.*

God is love.—1 John iv. 16.

My friends, the gospel is called *good news*, and a *joyful sound;* and I do not know what better news could be brought into a company of sinners of Adam's family, who are lying under the sentence of death, and condemned from heaven, and under the awful apprehensions of the wrath and vengeance of the great God, than to tell you that *God is love.* And I am sure, that, if this report of a God in Christ were but received and entertained in a way of believing, it would make every one of this assembly join issue with the angels at the birth of Christ, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good-will towards men." *God is love.* This is not to be understood of God essentially, but manifestatively, in the manifestation that he has made of himself in Christ: he is love, or love is the swaying attribute of his nature.

We are this day called to celebrate a love-feast: I have therefore chosen to discourse a little at this time on that attribute and perfection of the divine nature, which is most signally and remarkably displayed in this ordinance, which is the very same with that by which God is described in the words of my text, *God is love.*

It is a great question which you have in your Lesser Catechism, *What is God?* It puts men and angels to an everlasting stand and nonplus, to tell what he is. "Who can by searching find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" who is capable to tell the first letter of his glorious and ever blessed name? The highest seraphim in heaven cannot form an adequate conception of him, and, therefore, is not capable to give a full description of him: it is only some of the back parts of his glory that are seen or known by created beings. I remember to have heard of a certain philosopher, who, being asked what God is, desired time to answer it; when that time was come, desired a longer; and when that was come, desired yet a longer; and so on: and

* Preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Portmoak, July 17, 1726.

being asked the reason why he protracted the time, and deferred his answer, he replied, That the more he thought on God, the more he was swallowed up, and at a loss how to describe him. And so will it be with every finite understanding, that thinks to find him out to perfection: it is only God himself who can resolve the question, and tell what he is. And I remember of a three-fold answer that the Spirit of God gives to this question in scripture, *What is God?* One you have, John iv. 24: *God is a Spirit;* a second you have, 1 John i. 5: *God is light;* a third you have in the words of my text, *God is love.* The first two tell what God is in himself, but this tells us what God is to us.

If the question were asked, *What is God*, to a guilty sinner, that has violated his law, trampled upon his authority, and lifted up rebellious arms against his Sovereign? one would think that the answer would be, God is a God of fury, God is wrath, God is hatred, God is vengeance: but, to the eternal surprise of men and angels, the very reverse! the answer is, *God is love.*

The text, you see, is short, but, Oh! it is massy, full to a wonder: it is but one simple proposition. Where notice, (1.) The subject of the proposition, *God*, whose name commands reverence and adoration among men and angels. I conceive that God is not spoken of personally here, but essentially, as having a respect to all the persons of the adorable Trinity, who are one in essence, will, and operation; so that the meaning is, the Father is love, the Son is love, and the Holy Ghost is love. (2.) We have the predicate of the proposition, or the thing asserted concerning him, he is *love.* There is a height and a depth in this expression, which surpasses our comprehension: and we cannot give a just commentary upon it; for we do but darken counsel by words without knowledge, when we speak of God. All I shall say of it, by way of explication, is only to tell you, that God is one simple and uncompounded Being, and the divine attributes and perfections are all one in him: his wisdom is nothing else but the infinitely wise God; his power is nothing else but the omnipotent or almighty God; his holiness is nothing else but the infinitely holy God; his justice is the just and righteous God; so here love denotes the loving God, or a God of love. I shall only notice farther, that God here, in this description he gives of himself, is presented to our view, not in the law, but in the gospel-revelation of himself. When God is viewed by a guilty sinner in the law revelation, his justice and wrath immediately appear ready to take vengeance on the workers of iniquity; hence, the holiest of the saints of God, when they view him in this glass, cannot miss to fall a trembling: "I remembered God," says

the holy man, Psal. lxvii. 3, "and was troubled." But when God is viewed in the gospel revelation, or as he is in Christ, not imputing their trespasses to them, then grace, and love, and good-will present themselves to the sinner's view. And in this view God is to be considered in this description we have of him, *God is love*. From the words thus briefly opened, the observation I offer is this:—

Doct. "That God manifesting himself in Christ is a God of love."

Now, in prosecuting this doctrine, I shall endeavour,

I. To premise two or three things for clearing the way.

II. Prove that God in Christ is a God of love.

III. Offer you a view of the love of God in Christ.

IV. Inquire whence it is that God in Christ should be a God of love. And,

V. Apply the whole.

I. *The first* thing is, *to premise two or three things for clearing this doctrine.*

1. Know, that the goodness, sweetness, and pleasantness of God's nature is the foundation of his love; he has a heroic disposition of communicating of himself to others, and from thence flows his love to mankind. Hence it is, that when God had a mind to make known his love to Moses, he tells him, that he would make all his goodness to pass before him; and, accordingly, he proclaims himself to be, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." And with this view, I think our divines, in the 4th question of the Lesser Catechism, speak neither of the love, mercy, nor grace of God, but wrap them up in that general of goodness, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, and truth.

2. I premise, that love is the regnant or prevailing attribute of the divine nature, if I may so speak. So much seems to be pointed at in the expression of the text, *God is love*. I do not find any other attribute of the divine nature so expressed in the scripture; we do not find it is said, God is mercy, God is justice, God is holiness, God is power, or God is wisdom: no; the expression in this attribute has something peculiar in it, *God is love*. And I conceive it plainly bears this much, that love is, as it were, the imperial or commanding attribute of the divine nature, insomuch that every other attribute receives a dye and tincture of love from it: there is a strain of love runs through every one of them, and it is as it were the spring that sets all on work. What but love sets wisdom on work to contrive our redemption? what but love actuates infinite

power to execute that contrivance? what but love sets the bowels of mercy rolling towards the miserable sinner? Thus, I say, love is the first wheel as it were that sets all the other wheels a going.

3. The gift of Christ to a lost world is the most signal and glorious display of the love of God that ever heaven or earth heard tell of: hence is that of the apostle, in the 10th verse of this chapter where my text lies, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us," but how was this love manifested? "He sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." To the same purpose is that which you have, John iii. 16: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The love of God to sinners lay hid, as it were, under a veil of wrath and justice, till Christ appeared, undertaking to satisfy justice, and to bear the wrath of his Father in our room; then, indeed, the kindness and love of God to man appeared, venting itself in a most glorious and triumphant manner, insomuch that, in and through Christ, *grace* and love "reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." But this leads to,

II. The *second* thing in the method, which was, to *make it a little more evident, that God in Christ is a God of love.* This will be abundantly clear, if we consider these few things:—

1. God in Christ is a reconciled God, a God of peace, that has received the atonement: 2 Cor. v. 19: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Rom. v. 10: "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." He both finds the ransom, and accepts of the ransom that he has found; and having accepted of the ransom, of the Surety, he proclaims himself to be "the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ." Oh, sirs! does not this say that *God is love?* what greater evidence of it could God give, than to provide a ransom, and to receive it, than to cry, "Deliver them from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom?"

2. God in Christ is a promising God; and does not this say that he is a God of love? God abstractly considered is a threatening God, a revenging God; but, in Christ, a promising God; and we find, 2 Cor. i. 20, that all the promises of God are *in Christ*, and in him yea and amen." Whenever you meet with any promise in the Bible, of grace or of glory, of peace or of pardon, or be what it will, you should still take it up as a promise of a God in Christ: Christ having fulfilled the condition of the promise of eternal life, by his obedience and death, the promises are given out to us, through him, as

the immediate ground and foundation of our faith, with an intimation and advertisement, "The promise is unto you, and to your seed, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Sirs, if any man should present to you a bond, bill, or security, for a vast sum of money, which would enrich you for all your days, you would look upon it as a great and indisputable evidence of his love to you. Well, this is the very case between God and you; through Christ, he is a promising God; he comes in a gospel dispensation, saying, "I will put my Spirit within you; I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," &c. These promises are presented to you as the ground of your faith; and that very moment you take hold of them in a way of believing, you come to be possessed of them, and all the benefits of his purchase, according to that, Is. lv. 3: "Hear, and your soul shall live;" it is the hearing of faith that is intended; "and I will make" or establish "an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Oh, sirs! does not this say that *God is love?*

3. God in Christ is a God sitting upon a throne of grace: and does not this say, that *God is love?* God has a threefold throne,—a throne of glory, a throne of justice, and a throne of grace. The first of these, his throne of glory, is so bright, that it dazzles the eyes of angels, and they cover their faces with their wings when they approach it. The second, namely, his throne of justice, is clothed with red vengeance; and it is so terrible, that the most holy saints tremble when they behold it, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?—In thy sight shall no man living be justified." And because we were not able to stand here, he has erected another throne, namely, a throne of grace, from whence he issues out acts of grace and mercy to guilty sinners; and so soon as he is seen sitting upon his throne, he is taken up as a God of love; and upon this the poor sinner, that was trembling at the thoughts of being cited before the throne of justice, flees for his life to the throne of grace, saying with the apostle, Heb. iv. 16: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

4. God in Christ is a God matching with us, and betrothing us unto himself in loving kindness; and does not this say, that he is a God of love? There is a twofold match that the great and infinite JEHOVAH has made with Adam's family. (1.) He matches with our nature by a personal union in the person of his eternal Son: he marries our nature; and thus he becomes akin to the whole family of Adam, an honour that the angelic

family was never dignified with; for "he takes not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." Oh, sirs! what shall I tell you? strange and surprising news indeed, "God is manifested in the flesh!" The great God becomes related to us in Christ; for he is clothed with our nature; he is become "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh;" and what is the language of this, but that of the angels at his birth, "glad tidings of great joy, good will and peace towards men upon earth?" (2.) Another match he makes with us, is, by taking us actually under the bond of a marriage relation. The match is proposed to all in the call and offer of the gospel: but you know the bare proposal of marriage does not make marriage, till once the consent of the bride be obtained; and the moment the soul gives its assent and consent to the proposal made in the gospel, he betroths that soul to himself in loving kindness and in mercy, in righteousness and in judgment; and the Lord rejoices over that soul, as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride, saying to it, "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name," Is. liv. 5. And, oh, sirs! does not this say that *God is love?* Because the distance between him and us was too great, (abstractly considered,) therefore, he first comes on a level with us, by taking on our nature, that so the inequality of the persons might be no stop: he becomes our husband, and we his spouse and bride.

5. God in Christ is a God with us, on our side, our friend, and takes part with us against all evil or danger: and does not this say, that *God is love*, as he is in Christ? Oh, sirs! God out of Christ is a God against us: hence, he is said to be "angry with the wicked every day;" he "whets his glittering sword, and his hand takes hold on judgment," to render vengeance to every transgressor of his holy law. But God in Christ is not a God against us, but a God with us, or a God for us; the name *Immanuel* imports, *God with us.* And every one that takes a God in Christ for their God, may say, upon warrantable grounds, with the church, Psal. xlvi. 7: "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." And they may say it upon a covenant ground, for God in Christ has said, Is. xliii. 2: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.—I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

6. God in Christ is a pardoning God: and does not this declare him to be a God of love? "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. I will be merciful to their unrighteousness," &c.

7. God in Christ is a pitying God; he pities Christless and unbelieving sinners, and is loath at his very heart to give up with them: Hos. xi. 8: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." And how great is his pity to the soul that believes in him! His pity to them is like the pity of a father to his son: Psal. ciii. 13: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." It is like the pity of a fond mother to a sucking child: Is. lxix. 15: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that he should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

8. God in Christ is a God of infinite bounty and liberality, and a prayer-hearing God; (I cast things together, that I may not be tedious.) Oh, sirs! his heart is free, and his hand is full and open; open-hearted, open-handed: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." Such is his bounty and liberality, that it is nothing but ask and have with him: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," Matth. vii. 7. When we have asked great things of him, he [chides] us, as if we had asked nothing: he does not deal with a scrimp or a sparing hand: no, no: "Ask, and ye shall receive," says he, "that your joy may be full." Yes, such is his bounty, that he is ready to do for us exceeding abundantly above what we can either ask or think; such is his bounty, that he presents us with the blessings of his goodness: his goodness and mercy are like the rain or dew, that does not wait for the sons of men: Is. lxv. 24: "And it shall come to pass, that, before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

9. God in Christ is an inciting God, an entreating God, to sinners: and does not this say, that he is a God of love? He invites us to come to him for all needful grace: Is. lv. 1: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." He is an entreating God in Christ: 2 Cor. v. 20: "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." He complains of the backwardness of sinners to come to him: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." He expostulates with them on this account: "O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." He waits for an answer; he will not take a re-

pulse. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." And he stands knocking till his locks are wet. Oh! does not all this say that God in Christ is love?

10. To crown all, God in Christ is our God. He makes a grant of himself in the covenant as such; "I will be their God:" and he allows us to claim him by faith as our God, upon this very grant he makes of himself to us in Christ, Zech. xiii. 9: "I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." And, oh! happy that soul that is enabled to give faith's echo to this covenant grant, and say, "This God is my God for ever and ever; and he will be my Guide even unto death." In a word, God in Christ is our Father; for it is only a God in Christ that says, "I will be unto them a Father, and they shall be unto me sons and daughters." He has taught us to say, "Our Father which art in heaven." And he is displeased with us, when we are shy with him, through unbelief, to call him by this endearing title: Jer. iii. 4: "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father,—and not turn away from me?" Oh! what but the infinite bowels of love could speak in such a style and dialect! Now, from all this I think the truth of the doctrine is abundantly evident, that God in Christ is a God of love.

III. The *third* thing in the method was, to *offer you some views of the love of this God in Christ.* And there is only a threefold view of it that I shall present you with. 1. View it in the kinds of it. 2. View it in the dimensions of it. 3. In its qualities.

First, I say, let us view the love of a God of love, in the different kinds of it.

1. Then, He has a love of benevolence, or good-will, which he bears towards men, particularly towards the whole visible church. The lifting up of the brazen serpent in the camp of Israel, that whosoever looked to it might be healed, was a clear evidence of his good-will to the whole camp: so the manifestation of Christ in the nature of man, and the revelation of him in the gospel, is an evidence of the good-will he bears to the salvation of all, John iii. 15, 16. He declares it on his word, that he is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" and, lest his word should not be believed, he has confirmed it with his oath, Ezek. xxxiii. 11: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

2. He has a love, not only of benevolence, but of beneficence; he not only wishes you well, but does well unto you. Oh, sirs! many a good turn has he done you, particularly you

who are members of the visible church; he gives you line upon line, precept upon precept; he makes you to hear the joyful sound, the voice of the turtle: many a minister has he sent you; many an offer of Christ, and of life through him, has he made to you; many a time has he knocked at thy door, by word, by conscience, and the motions and whispers of his Spirit; so that he may say to us, as he did of his vineyard, Is. v. 4: "What could have been done more for them, that I have not done?" And because of your obstinacy in unbelief and sin, he may challenge you as he did Israel, and say, Mic. vi. 3: "O, my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. Was I ever a barren wilderness, or a land of darkness?" Thus, I say, God's love of benevolence and beneficence is, in some respects, extended to all.

3. There is a love of complacency, or delight and satisfaction, which is peculiar only to believers; who, because of the excellency of his loving kindness, do put their trust under the shadow of his wings. Oh, believer, the Lord loves thee, a God of love loves thee, not only with a love of benevolence and beneficence, as he does others, in some respects, but he loves thee with a complacent love, as so to take pleasure in thee: "The Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation." He loves thee with a love of estimation: he puts such a high value and estimate upon thee, that thou art precious in the sight of the Lord, thou art his treasure, and his peculiar treasure: "The Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." He loves thee with a love of union; he desires thy company, and to hear thy voice, and to see thy countenance: Cant. ii. 14: "O, my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." He loves thee with an ecstatic love: his love runs out into a kind of rapture and ecstasy, Cant. iv. 9, twice with one breath he cries out, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." No where is the word used in scripture but here; "Thou hast ravished my heart." New words are, as it were, coined to express the inexpressible love, that a God in Christ bears towards his people. The word signifies, thou hast UNHEARTED ME: it is an allusion to that which is a weakness in us, when our affections run so much out to any particular object, as to become heartless of any thing else. Some render the words, "thou hast wounded or pierced my heart, Oh, my sister," &c. The love of God

runs so deep, that he was content, in the person of his eternal Son, to be "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities."

Now, the complacent love of God to his people is variously expressed in scripture. As,

1*st*, His love is said to be a pastoral love, or the love a shepherd has to his flock: Is. xl. 11: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd," &c.

2*dly*, His love is a friendly love: "Ye are my friends," says he, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." And, like a true friend, he communicates his mind to them, John xv. 15: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you. Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom; but to others it is not given."

3*dly*, His complacency in them sometimes runs out into a conjugal love: Is. liv. 5: "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name," &c.

4*thly*, Sometimes it runs out into a paternal love: "I will be to them a Father, and they shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." But why do I stand on this? In one word, his love is the love of a God; his love cannot be expressed by any similitude, for *God is love;* he is as it were all one flame of love to the believer. Love is in him in its perfection, and perfect love casts out hatred: his heart is just the very centre of love; and whatsoever sparks of love are to be found in any of our hearts, they are all kindled at this fire. As all the waters that are in the rivers come originally from the sea, and return back to it again; so any drop of love that is to be found in any of our hearts, is just an emanation of his love, returning back again into its proper centre, from whence it came. And thus much for the different kinds of his love.

Secondly, Let us view the love of God in its dimensions. Among corporeal beings there are only three dimensions reckoned; but the apostle, speaking of the love of God in Christ, admits of a fourth, Eph. iii. 17, 18. He there speaks of the height, the depth, the breadth, and length, of the love of God, which passes knowledge.

1. It is so high, that the height of it can never be reached; no, not by the most soaring angel or seraphim in heaven. We find, that the Spirit of God, when he would express his love, runs above the height of the highest heavens to borrow a similitude for the illustration of it, comparing it to the love which the Father bears the Son, John xv. 9: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." Oh! who can tell

how the Father loves the Son! there is more here than all the angels in heaven are capable either to conceive or express; yet such is the love of a God of love to believers.

2. He speaks not only of a height, but a depth in this love. The heart of man is a great depth, that none knows it, but he that knows all things; and if the heart of man be such a great depth, what must the heart of God be? Yet this love is rooted in the very heart of God; so much is implied in the very expression of the text, *God is love.* His love is a heart of love. He loves with the whole heart, and with the whole soul. So deep is his love, that it descended, as it were, to the depth to help and relieve us; it descended unto the depth of hell, in the dying agonies of the Son of God, to bring us up from the depth of misery and distress into which we had plunged ourselves.

3. This love of a God of love has also a breadth with it, which can never be measured. So broad is this love, that in the word of grace, and external dispensation of the gospel, it reaches forth its arms to embrace a lost world: John iii. 16: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." So broad is it, that it takes in Jew and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free; it takes in those that lived before the law, those that lived under the law, those that live under the gospel. Oh, sirs! the love of God is broad; his heart is wide and capacious: you need not fear as if there were no room for you: no, no, for all the innumerable multitude that his love has grasped, there is yet room for you, room for me, and room for all the world that come to him through Christ.

4. The apostle yet adds another dimension to this love, and that is, the length of it; and, in short, it is as long as eternity. Look back to an eternity past, and we shall find, that his love, like himself, never had a beginning: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." And let us look forward to an eternity to come, and we shall find that his love shall never have an end; for it is "from everlasting to everlasting;" he rests in his love, and changes not: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." Thus, you see its dimensions.

Thirdly, Let us take a view of the love of a God of love in its qualities and properties.

1. His love is a free love: Hos. xiv. 4: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." This love is free in its first fountain, viewing it, I mean, as it lies in the heart of

God. What made him to set his love upon any of Adam's posterity, and to choose them from eternity? The cause of it is not to be found in the creature, but in himself; only his own sovereign will and grace is the cause of it; for he "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," Eph. i. 5: "He hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9. And then, again, this love is free, not only in its first fountain, but free in the offer, revelation, and manifestation of it in the word: and the love of God, as it is in the word of grace, is a common love, common to all the hearers of the gospel, in regard it comes to every man's door, and offers itself to him: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come. Whosoever will, let him come," &c. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man." And then it is a free love, in regard of the application of it to the elect soul in a day of power; the love of God is manifested in the word of grace taken by the Holy Ghost, and shed abroad upon the sinner's heart, and that without regard to any good qualification or work of righteousness in us. In a word, this love of a God of love is free, in opposition to merit. That which conciliates love among men, is either beauty, strength, wisdom, riches, or some such qualification or inducement: but no such thing is to be found in any of Adam's posterity: "When thou wast in thy blood, I said unto thee, Live; and thy time was a time of love." Instead of beauty, nothing but deformity; instead of strength, nothing but weakness; instead of riches, nothing but poverty. And as it is free in opposition to merit, so it is free in opposition to any constraint or force. Love is a thing that cannot be forced; no, it is voluntary, and of its own accord. God's love is only owing to the freedom of his own will, Eph. i. 9.

2. The love of this God of love is a strong and invincible love. Before his love could reach us in the application of it, it had mountains to level: but, "behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills." There were deep seas and floods in the way of his love, but "many waters could not quench it, neither were all floods able to drown it:" it runs through every difficulty, it encounters every impediment in its way. The infinite distance between God and a creature, was a bar in the way of this love: but he conquers this impediment; for "God is manifested in the flesh." The moral distance between a filthy guilty sinner is an impediment in the way of this love: but he breaks this bar also; for the Son of God is not only manifested in the

flesh, but "made in the likeness of sinful flesh, yea, made sin for us." The curse of the law was a bar in the way: but this bar he breaks; for Christ was "made a curse for us, that we might be redeemed from the curse of the law." Sin in its guilt, and filth, and power, lay in the way of his love: but love breaks through this, and "finishes transgression, and makes an end of sin." Ignominy and disgrace lay in its way, grief and sorrow: but this love conquers that: for he was content to *endure the cross*, and love *despises the shame* of it; he is content, out of love, to become "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." And then, when this love comes to the sinner, in order to conversion, it finds him dead, *dead in trespasses and sins:* the man has perhaps laid twenty, thirty, forty, or sixty years in the grave of sin, so that, lo, he stinks: Oh, what an object is he! he is an object of loathing instead of love: but yet this love of a God of love conquers this impediment also: for, "when we were dead in sins, for the great love wherewith he loved us, he quickened us." And then, after this love has actually grasped the soul in effectual calling, how many provocations gets it by the whoredoms of heart and life-departing from the Lord? and yet, such is the invincible nature of this love, that it overcomes all, and abides firm to the end; hence, says the apostle, Rom. viii. 35, 37, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." It is because his love is invincible, that we are more than conquerors through him that loved us; because his love is strong as death, therefore, death shall not separate; because it is deep as hell, therefore, neither hell nor devils shall be able to make a separation.

3. The love of this God of love, is an incomparable, yea, a superlative love. Let us but view here how much a God in Christ loves them who "trust under the shadow of his wings, because of the excellency of his loving kindness." (1.) He loves them more than he loves all other men: Is. xliii. 3, 4: "I will give men for thee, and people for thy life." (2.) He loves believers more than he loves angels. Angels are his servants, believers are his sons; angels are his subjects, believers are his bride. (3.) He loves them more than he loves the whole world. The world consists of heaven and earth. As for the earth, he did not value that, for the love he had to his people: when the devil proffered him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, he contemned them all, out of love he had to his people. As for heaven, he left the glory of the higher house, to dwell with men upon earth. Yea, I shall add, (4.) The love of an incarnate Deity

is greater to his people than to himself. He loved their life and safety more than his own; for he laid down his life for his friends, that they might not die: he prayed more for them than he did for himself, as you may see, John xvii. throughout. In a word, out of love he bore to us, he parted with those things that are reckoned most valuable among men. Men make a great account of their good name; but, out of love to us, he became *a reproach of men*. Men make a great account of their riches; but "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." Men make a great account of their life; "skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life;" but Christ parted with this, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Men do or should make a great account of their souls; and yet, out of love to us, he made his soul an offering, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Men, I mean holy men, saints, make a greater account of the love of God than of their life, "Thy love is better than life," says David; and yet Christ was content to lose the sense of that for awhile, out of love to us; and it was withdrawn from him, to that degree, that he cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Thus much for a view of the love of a God of love.

IV. The *fourth* thing in the method was, to *inquire whence it is that, in Christ, God should be a God of love to lost, and undone, and rebellious sinners?* Whence comes this strange alteration, that a God of vengeance, who was ready to destroy all Adam's posterity because of sin, should lay aside his garments of vengeance, and appear to us as a God of grace and love?

Answ. 1. An offended and angry God is a God of love to us in Christ, because in him justice is satisfied; a ransom of infinite value is paid in the Redeemer's blood. The justice of God stood as an eternal bar, in the way of the manifestation of love to any of Adam's race; but no sooner did justice get a perfect satisfaction in the death of the Surety, but love vents itself with infinite delight and satisfaction, and God proclaims himself, as in Exod. xxxiv. 6: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

2. In Christ the law is fulfilled; its command is obeyed, and its curse is abolished. The violation of the holy law, by the first sin of Adam, was the thing that incensed the Majesty of heaven against us; but now Christ repairs the honour of the divine law, yea, he "magnifies it and makes it honourable:" and hence it is, that in Christ God is a God of love; for he is "well-pleased for his righteousness' sake."

3. In Christ God is a God of love, because in him that

arch-traitor against Heaven is condemned and destroyed. No sooner did sin enter into the world, but Heaven cried out for vengeance upon it and the sinner. Now, Christ undertakes to "finish transgression and make an end of sin," Dan. ix. 24; and, accordingly, for this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, to take away the sin of the world: he "condemned sin in the flesh," Rom. viii. 4. And hence it is, that God is a God of love to sinners.

4. In Christ, the holiness of God is vindicated, and his sovereignty is maintained, and all his other attributes, which were affronted by the sin of man, are, as it were, illustrated and set in a pure light. Never were the perfections of God so gloriously manifested as they are in Christ; he is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." There is a constellation of all the divine attributes in him, which were obscured by the sin of man. And hence it is, that God in him is a God of love.

5. Because in him, and by him, the image of God in man, which was defaced by the fall, is again restored. This we lost in the first Adam; but it is again restored in Christ, the second Adam; for, through him we are "renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created us." But I do not stay farther upon this head. I proceed now to,

V. The *fifth* thing in the method, which was the *application* of the whole.

Use *first* of the doctrine shall be of *information*, in the few following particulars. Is it so, that in and through Christ God is a God of love?

1. See, hence, how much we owe to Christ; for it is owing to his incarnation, obedience, and death, that ever God manifested himself to any of Adam's posterity as a God of love. The love of God to us runs through the channel of blood, that so it might reach us in a consistency with the honour of justice; for love could never take place, to the hurt or prejudice of justice; but in him, "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace kiss each other." Oh, then! how much does it concern us to celebrate the praises of our Redeemer Christ Jesus, and to cry, "To him that loved us, be glory and praise!" and "Salvation to our God, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever!"

2. See, hence, the excellency of the gospel, and what a glorious privilege it is, to live under the dispensations thereof. Why, what is the gospel? It is just the revelation of the love of God in Christ, or of God as a God of love and grace in Christ; and may we not cry out with the psalmist, Psal. lxxxix. 15: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound?" What more joyful sound can come to the ears of a company of

traitors, rebels, condemned sinners, than that the God against whom they have sinned, is a God of love, a reconciled God, not imputing their trespasses unto them? Oh, sirs! prize the gospel, and study to take up God according to the gospel-revelation of him; for "it is life eternal to know him," and his Son Jesus Christ, as he is set forth in the gospel.

3. See, hence, what an unreasonable thing the enmity of the heart against God is, whether reigning enmity in the wicked, or remaining in the saints. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; and much of this remains in the hearts of believers themselves, while in an imbodied state, as is plain in the case of the apostle, who groaned under it, saying, "Wretched man that I am! I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." But, oh, sirs! let us see what a ridiculous and what an unjust thing it is. Oh! to have enmity against love! strange, indeed! What a monstrous thing would you reckon it in a person, lying in the utmost misery, to entertain malice or enmity in his heart, against one whose bowels are yearning towards him, and offering to relieve him with the most tender compassion! Yet this is the very case between God and us. He shows himself to be a God of love, yea, love itself: he offers his salvation to us, and to bring us out of the horrible pit and miry clay of sin and misery; to heal our wounds, to cure our diseases, and to save us with an everlasting salvation: and, yet, to entertain enmity against this God of love, oh! how unjust and unreasonable is it! May not God say to us on this account, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?"

4. See, hence, what way the natural enmity of the heart, and obstinacy of the will, are mastered and conquered in a day of conversion: why, it is just by a revelation of God in Christ to the sinner, as a God of love. The Spirit of the Lord comes in a day of power, and he shines into the heart with the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and with this light of the knowledge, there is an emanation of love from a God of love, which conquers, and captivates, and carries down the power of enmity: hence, he is said to "draw with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love." And when this natural enmity begins to gather strength again, in the soul of the believer, and comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up the banner of love against it, by a new manifestation of the love of God in Christ: thus this Jordan is driven back.

5. See, hence, whence it is that those who know God in Christ, so much breathe after communion and fellowship with him; whence it is that they put such a value upon these tryst-

ing places where they use to enjoy him: why, they know him to be a God of love; and, therefore, one day in his courts, is "better than a thousand." O! says David, "how amiable are thy tabernacles! My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" He knew him to be a God of love: and this made his company so sweet and desirable to him: "O! taste and see that God is good. —How excellent is his loving kindness!" It "is better than life."

6. See, hence, how it comes that there is no fellowship between God and a godless sinner: God does not delight in their company, and they do not delight in his company: why, the matter lies here, *God is love*, and the sinner is "enmity against God;" and what fellowship can there be between things that are so opposite to one another? "What fellowship hath light with darkness? what concord between Christ and Belial," between heaven and hell? Oh, sirs! beware of venturing to come to the table of a God of love, with enmity in your hearts against him; lest he say to you, as he did to Judas, "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" You cannot give a deeper wound to the heart of a God of love, than to come with enmity to his feast of love: hence it is, that unworthy communicants are said to "eat and drink judgment to themselves," and to be "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

7. See whence an evil heart of unbelief causes us to depart from the living God: why, the plain reason is, unbelief, like the spies that were sent up to Canaan, brings up an evil report of a God of love; it represents him as a God of hatred, wrath, or anger; it says that there is no love or kindness in his heart; that God hath "forgotten to be gracious;" that "he has in anger shut up his tender mercy;" it will not believe the report of the gospel, that God is a God of love; it entertains jealousies of his grace, love, and faithfulness: and, hence it is, that it turns us away from him. So long as we, through unbelief, view God as an enemy, we cannot miss to turn away from him; for it is but natural for any man to turn away from an enemy, or to fly his company or presence, as Adam did.

8. See, hence, how it is by faith we draw near to God. As unbelief turns us away from him; so it is by faith we come to him, and have access to his presence: why, faith believes the gospel report of a God in Christ; that he is a God of love, a reconciled God, a God sitting upon a throne of grace, a God matching with our nature, making proposals of marriage to us; a God with us, a pardoning God, a pitying God, a prayer-hearing God, a liberal God; yea, it takes him up as

our God in Christ, saying, "My God, my Father, and the Rock of my salvation." Now, I say, this is the view in which faith presents God to the soul; and this makes the soul to follow hard after God, and the desire of the soul to be to him, and the remembrance of his name.

9. See, from this doctrine, whence it is that God's commandments are not grievous, why his yoke is easy, and his burden is light: why, the believer sees them to be the commandments of love; and love sweetens every thing, and makes every thing easy and pleasant. The love that Jacob had to Rachel, made his seven years' service to appear but a few days: so here it is love that commands, and love obeys; and this makes obedience sweet and easy: and it is the want of due uptakings of God as a God of love, and of his commandments as the commandments of love, that makes them intolerable and burdensome to the wicked and ungodly. Why do they "break his bands, and cast away his cords from them?" Why, they have no consideration of God as a God of love; they take him up as an enemy, and, therefore, any obedience they give him is but slavish.

10. See from this doctrine, what a lightsome and heartsome dwelling-place the believer has: why, he dwells in God; God is his dwelling-place: "He dwells in the secret place of the Most High, and abides under the shadow of the Almighty:" and that is in the midst of love; for *God is love*, "and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." Oh what a lightsome dwelling is the bosom of infinite love! and "he carries his lambs in his bosom." Perhaps, believer, you "sojourn in Mesech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar, thy soul dwells with them that hate peace." But here is thy comfort; thou dwellest in love, dwellest in God, who is love; thou liest in his bosom: and this may bear up thy spirits: for though in the world thou mayst be hated, and have tribulation, yet in him thou hast peace.

11. See from this doctrine the difference between the law and the gospel: why, the law presents God as an absolute God, in which respect he is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity: he is a revenging God: but the gospel presents God to our view as a God of love and grace, with whom compassions flow towards miserable sinners. Indeed, we that are ministers of the gospel are bound to preach the law, to stand upon Mount Sinai and Ebal, and to proclaim the curses of the broken covenant of works against Christless sinners: but when we do so, our design is just to scare you from the law as a covenant, to lead you off from "the mount that burns with fire," from "blackness, and darkness, and tempest," that you may fly to mount Zion, and to the blood of sprinkling,

and in him to God, the Judge of all, that through his atoning blood you may find him to be a God of love.

Use *second* of this doctrine, is by way of *exhortation.*

1. Is it so that *God is love?* Is God in Christ a God of love? Oh! then, sirs, believe the report of the gospel: Oh! receive it as "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," that God in Christ is love: and do not receive it upon my testimony, but receive it upon the testimony or the record of the "three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit:" a Trinity of persons is witnessing and declaring to you, that *God is love;* and, therefore, "set to your seal that God is true" of what he says of himself; and, sirs, remember, that if you do not, you make God a liar, because you "receive not the record that God has given of himself."

2. My exhortation is, not only to believe this truth concerning God, but, oh! eat it, (as Jeremiah did,) and let it be "the joy and rejoicing of your heart." Eat it, say you; what is that? how can we eat it? I answer, The way to eat it, is to apply and bring it home to your own souls. Oh, sirs, there is much food for faith in this little word, *God is love.* Oh! may faith say, is God love? then surely he will make me welcome to his table: he is a God of infinite bounty and liberality in Christ, and he will give that which is good; a God of love will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from his people.

3. Is God in Christ a God of love? yea, love itself? Oh! then, put your trust in him. This is the use the Spirit of God would have you to make of this doctrine, Psal. xxxvi. 7: (a sweet and remarkable word,) "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." Oh, sinners! the wings of a God of love are spread out to you, and his bowels are sending out a sound after you in this glorious gospel; and his hand is stretched out to you in this gospel, saying, "Behold me, behold me." Oh! do not run away from him as an enemy, but trust him as a friend that bears good-will towards you. What is it, O man, that a God of love in Christ is not ready to grant to thee? Dost thou want garments to cover the shame of thy nakedness? a God of love is ready to grant thee this. Perhaps thou hast some thoughts of coming to a communion-table; but thou art afraid lest thou be found naked in his presence, and the Master of the feast say unto thee, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?" Is this thy case? O put your trust in a God of love through Christ, and he will clothe you with "the garments of salvation, and with the robes of righteous-

ness." Dost thou want a pardon for sin? art thou a broken bankrupt, that owes thousands of talents to the law and justice of God? Art thou crying, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me?" Well, a God of love is a pardoning God: and therefore trust him for the pardon of thy sins; for he says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Oh, may you say, I am a poor captive, I am in chains, under the fetters of captivity to my spiritual enemies; the bonds of iniquity are wreathed about my soul. Well, a God of love proclaims "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;" and, therefore, O trust him, and he will make thee to share of the glorious liberty of his own children; he will make thy chains and fetters to fall off from thee. Art thou a black and ugly sinner, by lying among the pots, black like the Ethiopian, spotted like the leopard? Well, put thy trust under the wings of a God of love; for he says, "though thou hast lien among the pots, I will make thee as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.—I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." Art thou a diseased sinner, full of bruises and putrefying sores! Well, put thy trust in a God of love in Christ: for his name is JEHOVAH ROPHI, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." Art thou a poor wandering bewildered sinner, that hast lost thy way to heaven, and hast gone astray like a lost sheep? Well, come, put your trust in a God of love: for he has "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way;" a God of love in Christ has said, that he will "lead the blind," &c., and that he will make "the wayfaring man, though a fool, to walk without erring." Art thou a treacherous dealer, that hast "gone a whoring after other lovers," prostrated thyself to every vile lust? Well, come yet and put thy trust under the wings of a God of love; for his voice unto you is, Jer. iii. 1, "Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me." He is crying from the top of the high places this day, "Return, O backsliding Israel; for I am married unto thee. For I will heal thy backslidings, and love thee freely, and receive thee graciously." So, then, I say, whoever thou art, or whatever thou art, I invite and call you to trust under the wings of a God of love, because of the excellency of his loving kindness. And for motives, consider,

1*st*, That you cannot do a God of love a greater pleasure. Would you please God to-day, or oblige his very heart? Well, trust him as a God of love; for "he taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy," or that trust in him as a God of love.

2*dly*, Would you be fed, yea, feasted, this day, at a communion-table, with the fatness of God's house, with fat things full of marrow? Oh! then, here is the way to it; put your trust in a God of love, come in under his wings: Psal. xxxvii. 3: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." You see you have not only his promise, that you shall be fed, but his promise supported and ratified by a strong asseveration, *Verily, thou shalt be fed.* Would you be fed with the blessings of heaven, the blessings of a well-ordered covenant, the sure mercies of David! Oh! then, trust in a God of love; for "blessed are all they that trust in him," Psal. lxxxiv. 12. Would you have languishing grace revived, brought into a thriving and blooming condition? Oh! then, trust in a God of love, Jer. xvii. 7, 8: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Would you be filled with peace? then trust in a God of love: Is. xxvi. 3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." Would you be filled with the joys of God's salvation? then trust in a God of love: Psal. xiii. 5: "I have trusted in thy mercy, my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation." In a word, not to insist, trust in a God of love, and you shall never perish: "none perish that trust in him:" you shall never be confounded nor dismayed; and he will never forsake you: "Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee, and trust in thee." You shall have all needful preparation for a communion table; for "the preparation of the heart, and answer of the tongue, comes from him." So, then, I say, trust in a God of love. I think it is enough to engage you all to trust him, to repeat the text, and to say, *God is love.* If any of you apprehend a man to be your enemy, in that case you will have no trust to put in him; but if you be once persuaded he loves you, and wants only an opportunity to do you all the service he can, in that case you will trust him with assured confidence. Well, sirs, we tell you, that God is not only a friend, bearing good-will to you, but he is love, love itself; love is the imperial or commanding attribute of his nature: O, how excellent is his loving kindness! therefore, let the sons of men, let sinners and saints, put their trust under the shadow of his wings.

4. A fourth exhortation from the text is this: Is it so, that a God in Christ is a God of love? Oh, then, sirs, reciprocate your love on a God of love, and render him love for love

"This is the first and great commandment" of the moral law, and the sum of the first table of the law, Matth. xxii. 37, 38: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." Here is the most reasonable and just command that ever was. What can be more reasonable than to love him, who is not only lovely, but love itself, and whose love runs out towards us in such a surprising and astonishing way? Sure I am, it is your "reasonable service," to love him with all thy heart, soul, strength, and mind. And, sirs, this is a command which, to obey, I am sure will not be painful; for, when God commands you to love him, he commands you to make yourselves happy; for the very happiness of the rational soul lies in the outgoings of God's love to you, and the outgoings of your love and affections towards him. Oh, sirs! love to a God of love "is the fulfilment of the law;" you perform all duties, and exercise all graces at once, when you get your hearts drawn out in love to a God in Christ. What is faith, but love trusting and confiding in the beloved object? What is hope, but love expecting and longing after the enjoyment of him? What is patience, but love bearing and suffering what a God of love lays on? What is humility, but love lying at the feet of a God of love? What is heavenly-mindedness, but love soaring, as upon eagles' wings, after a God of love? What is zeal, but love inflamed with desire to serve a God of love? What are all good works, but love displaying itself in actions of obedience to the commands of a God of love? What is it to communicate? It is just to show forth the dying love of a God of love. What is it to pray, but to offer up our desires to a God of love? What is it to praise, but to give vent to the heart in the commendation of a God of love? So that, I say, when you love a God of love, you, as it were, do all things at once. And then, to engage and encourage your love, in the very command itself he presents himself to thee as thy God, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." Thus, he ushers in the commandment of the moral law, with, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the house of bondage." He is thy God, not only by creation, as he is the God of all living; but he is thy God in covenant, thy God in Christ: and when he says, "I am thy God," he in effect says, All that I am, all that I have, all that I can do, I make over to you in an everlasting covenant, which shall never be broken. Oh, sirs! shall not all this kindle a flame of love in your bosoms to a God of love? This is a large field, and would admit of a great enlargement: but, that I may not hinder the great work of the day, I shall proceed no farther. The Lord bless what has been said, and to his name be praise.

SERMON XIII.

UNBELIEF ARRAIGNED AND CONDEMNED AT THE BAR OF GOD.*

JOHN XVI. 8, 9.—And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me.

He that believeth not, is condemned already.—JOHN III. 18.

CHRIST having, in the preceding verse, declared the great end and design of his mission by the Father, or of his manifestation in our nature; namely, not that he should "condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved;" in the verse where my text lies, deduces a two-fold inference therefrom. The first is very sweet and comfortable, in the former part of the verse; "He that believeth on him, is not condemned;" that is, he who falls in with the great end of my manifestation in the nature of man, he who gives me my errand, by intrusting his lost and ruined soul into my hand, although he be a sinner, and a great sinner, though the law and justice of God be pursuing him, for the many millions of talents he is owing: yet the process shall be stopped, the judgment arrested, the sentence of the broken law cancelled, insomuch that he cannot come into condemnation; and if he be not condemned, he must be absolved and acquitted. I, as his Surety, have paid the debt, and obtained the discharge under the hand of justice; I was *made sin for* him, *that* he *might be made the righteousness of God in* me: and, therefore, who can lay any thing to his charge?

The second inference, drawn from the design of the incarnation of the Son of God, is very terrible and awful; and you have it in the words I design to insist a little upon, *He that believeth not, is condemned already.* For which there is a very relevant reason given, in the close of the verse: "Because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

It is the middle clause of the verse on which I am to speak—

* Preached at the Tolbooth Church of Edinburgh, March 2, 1727.

He that believeth not, is condemned already. Where we may notice, (1.) A capital crime chargeable upon most of gospel hearers, *not believing.* (2.) An awful sentence passed against the criminal; *he is condemned.* (3.) The quality of the sentence implied in that expression, condemned *already.* Which may point either at the certainty of the unbeliever's condemnation: it is not simply a thing future, or to be done; but it is done already. The sentence is pronounced and gone forth against him, from the mouth of the righteous Judge; yea, not only is sentence passed, but is partly executed, the law having delivered him over, in a way of righteous judgment, into the power and dominion of sin, which is spiritual death. Or, the word *already* may point at the severity of the unbeliever's sentence; his sin is of such a deep dye, of such a criminal nature, that the Judge cannot sit with it, as he doth with other sins, Psal. l. 21. It offers such indignity to his beloved Son, the darling of his soul, that he cannot shun to adjudge the panel to immediate death. Or, the word may intimate this much to us, that the sentence of the broken law stands in full force and vigour against the unbelieving sinner, for all his other sins: he despises the only remedy, the only sacrifice for sin; and therefore every sinful thought, word, and action, exposes him to the just vengeance of a righteous God, in time, and through endless eternity.

My doctrine is, "That every unbeliever is a sentenced and condemned criminal before God. Or, take it, if you will, in the very words of the text, *He that believeth not, is condemned already.*"

Here, through divine assistance, I shall speak,
I. Of the crime.
II. Of the sentence.
III. Of the grounds on which the sentence is founded.
IV. Deduce some inferences from the whole.

I would *speak a little of the crime, which is unbelief,* by giving some account of it, 1. In its nature; 2. In its causes.

As for the *first,* namely, the nature of unbelief. Before I proceed to show in what it consists, to prevent mistakes, I shall name a few things, which will not amount to this heavy charge in God's reckoning, whatever they may sometimes do in the court of an erring or misinformed conscience.

1. Unbelief does not lie in a person's being in the dark as to his actual union with Christ, or interest in him. A real believer may want the sensible assurance of God's love, and yet, at the same time, be acting faith with an assurance of appropriation upon the promise of a reconciled God in Christ.

Sense may be saying, as in the case of Heman, Psal. lxxxviii. "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. I am afflicted and ready to die, from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." And yet faith breathing out its appropriating act, and saying, "O Lord God of my salvation;" it will look in the face of a hiding and smiting God, and say, "Though he should slay me, yet will I trust in him." And, seeing it is so, it must needs follow, that unbelief does not lie in a person's being in the dark as to his actual interest in Christ; to say so, were to "offend against the generation of the righteous," who may be "trusting in the name of the Lord, and staying themselves upon their God, while they walk in darkness, and see no light."

2. Unbelief does not lie in the interruption of the actings and exercise of faith. We find the faith of the most eminent saints many times interrupted in its exercise, through the prevalency of temptation and indwelling corruption. Psal. lxxvii. 7, &c., the holy man there, in a fit of unbelief, cries, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? doth his promise fail for evermore?" David, in the like case, gives the lie to a God of truth, through the sides of all his prophets, Psal. cxvi. 10, 11: "I said in my haste, All men are liars." This was indeed a pang of unbelief; but it did not argue unbelief in its reign. Many times faith is laid asleep in its habit, while yet the life of it remains; like Samson in the hands of the Philistines, though his life was continued, yet the locks, in which his strength lay, were cut off.

3. This unbelief, of which I speak, does not consist in a disbelief of some particular truths of the word, through ignorance, providing they be not fundamental. Every error in the head, through ignorance, does not destroy the being of faith in the heart; no more than every miscarriage in the life, through weakness, destroys the being and reality of the grace of God in the soul. The apostles, we find, all the time of Christ's life, yea, after his resurrection also, were in an error as to the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, imagining that it was to be modelled after the fashion of the kingdoms of this world; neither did they believe the universal call and offer of the gospel to the Gentile nations, as well as to the Jews, until they were convinced of their error by Peter's vision. But, notwithstanding of this error of theirs, they believed in Christ as the promised Messiah, and rested on him as the Saviour of the world.

4. I do not here speak of the negative unbelief of the Heathen world, who never had the benefit of gospel revelation: "How shall they believe," (says the apostle, Rom. x. 14,) "in him of whom they have not heard?" Their unbelief, or in-

fidelity, is more properly their punishment than their sin. They can no more be punished for not believing in Christ, than a man can be condemned for not seeing the sun at midnight, when it is in the other horizon; or than a man can be blamed for not receiving a gift that was never offered to him. So that, it is not the negative unbelief of the Heathens of which I now speak, but the positive unbelief of those who sit under the light of the glorious gospel.

But, say you, seeing none of these will amount to the charge of unbelief, in what does it consist? *Answ.* There are three things, any one of which will amount to this capital crime:—

1. A denial of the truth of the gospel; looking upon the word of God, contained in the scriptures, as a fiction, or a *cunningly devised fable.* I am very suspicious there are unbelievers of this stamp among those who are called by the name of Christians; men pretending to be great masters of reason, who, because their weak and depraved minds cannot grasp the unsearchable mysteries of our holy religion, do, therefore, turn infidels, and reject the whole as an incredible paradox. This very thing upon which they stumble, proves it to be of a divine original. The unsearchable wisdom that appears in every one of the works of God, proves them to be indeed his works, and not the works of any created being. And shall it be imagined, that there is less wisdom in his words than in his works, when they are the more immediate product and picture of his infinite understanding, which can never be searched out? Here, if any where, we may expect the "deep things of God; the wisdom of God in a mystery, which none of the princes of this world knew."

2. A doubting or wavering uncertainty of mind about the truths of the gospel, will amount to this crime of unbelief pointed at in my text. There are some, who, though they do not go the length of denying flatly that the Bible is the word of God, or that the gospel is of a divine original, yet they waver, and are in suspense about it; like the worshippers of Baal, they "halt between two opinions;" they neither believe nor disbelieve it; but are like the scales of an even balance, ready to turn either to this or the other side. Such are unbelievers, in Christ's reckoning; for "he that is not with me," says he, "is against me."

3. When, though a person may be convinced in his mind, by rational arguments, that the Bible is the word of God, that the gospel is of a divine extract, yet does not fall in with the great design of the scriptures, by receiving Christ, and resting upon him alone for salvation, as he is there presented and discovered. We have the design of the whole word of God expressed in one verse, John xx. 31: "These things are

written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." And therefore when Christ is not received as the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world, and actually improved for these ends and uses for which he is revealed and exhibited in the word; particularly for "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" in this case, I say, a person falls under the heavy charge of unbelief, and is condemned already. This last is the unbelief which I take to be principally pointed at in my text, and is most frequent and prevalent among the hearers of the gospel. So much for the nature of unbelief.

I come, *secondly*, to inquire a little into some of its causes; and, among many that might be named, I shall only mention these few:—

1. The devil has a great hand in it. Faith is the great engine by which his kingdom and interest is overthrown in the world; and therefore he studies, by might and main, to keep the sinner under the power of unbelief: for which end, he uses a great many wiles and stratagems. His first and principal care is, to hush the house, and keep it in peace and quiet. In order to this, he persuades the man that his state is good enough; that, though he be a sinner, yet his sins are but small and venial; and that it cannot consist with the justice of God to pursue such small sins with eternal punishment. If, notwithstanding these surmises, the man's conscience cannot be satisfied, but it begins to awaken, challenge, and smite him, he studies to lay him asleep again, with the prospect of general and absolute mercy. If, again, this lying refuge be beat down by the hail of divine terrors, he betakes himself to another artifice; he conceals and hides the attribute of mercy, presenting God to the soul as an implacable and inexorable Judge, who will by no means acquit the guilty; and thus, by hiding the remedy, he studies to drive the sinner to despair. And, indeed, the devil is much more skilled in representing the justice than the mercy of God to a sinner's view, being an utter stranger to the last, but well acquainted with the first from his sad experience. But whatever views he gives of God to the sinner, whether in his justice or mercy, his design is still to carry the soul off from Christ, and the mercy of God running in the channel of his satisfactory blood. By presenting absolute mercy, he encourages the sinner to go on in sin, hoping to be saved, though he never be sanctified by the Spirit of Christ. When he presents the justice of God, he studies to drive the sinner to a hopeless despair of salvation by his atoning blood; and thereupon the sinner either with Judas runs to a halter for ease, or puts on a desperate

resolution, that if he be damned, he shall be damned for something, and so takes a full swing in gratifying his lusts, crying with those, Jer. ii. 25, "There is no hope. We have loved strangers, and after them will we go." If, notwithstanding the utmost arts and efforts of hell, the remedy be discovered to the sinner, namely, Christ, as the alone foundation God hath laid in Zion; then the enemy has another stratagem at hand to discourage the poor sinner from making use of Christ: he persuades the man that he is not fit enough for Christ; he must be so humble, so holy, so penitent, and have this and the other qualification, before he venture to come to Christ. O if I were sanctified, mortified, self-denied, washed, then Christ would make me welcome. This is nothing but an artifice of hell, for the ruin of souls, persuading sinners that they must bring money and price with them to Christ; that they must have such and such things before they come to Christ, which are only to be got by an actual union with him by faith. Thus, I say, the devil has a great hand in unbelief; it being the very strength of his kingdom; and so long as he keeps this hold in safety, he is very easy what shapes of morality, civility, or profession, a man may cast himself into; for he well knows that "he who believes not, shall be damned," let him do else whatever he pleases.

2. Ignorance is another great cause of unbelief. "My people," says the Lord, "are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Ignorance of God, in his holiness, justice, and other adorable excellencies; ignorance of the law of God in its purity, extent, and spirituality; ignorance of sin in its exceeding sinfulness; ignorance of the great mystery of godliness, the union of the two natures in the person of our wonderful IMMANUEL; ignorance of his substitution in the room of sinners, and of that everlasting and law-magnifying righteousness he has brought in by his obedience unto the death; ignorance of the free access sinners have to Christ, and his whole salvation, in and by a confirmed testament or promise, which is put in their hands, and *left* to them, Heb. iv. 1, that they may use and claim the benefit of it in a way of believing: I say, the god of this world "blinds the minds of them which believe not," that they may not know "the things which belong to their eternal peace;" he is afraid, "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into their hearts." I am persuaded, did sinners but know how near Christ, and his purchased salvation, are brought to them by the gospel, there would not be so many unbelievers among us. People generally look on Christ, and eternal life in him, as things that are far out of their reach; and thereupon they turn careless and easy about

them, having no hope of ever attaining them, being things too high and great for them. But, O sirs, this is only a veil or mist cast before your eyes, by the great enemy of your salvation, that you may not see your *own mercy;* for were your eyes opened, you would see Christ, and all the blessings of his purchase, brought, as it were, within the very reach of your hand. The manna is lying round your tent-door, and you have no more ado but to gather and use it, Is. xlvi. 13; Rom. x. 7, 8; John vi. 32.

3. Pride is another great cause of unbelief. This is just the poison of the old serpent, who being "lifted up with pride, fell into condemnation." By pride he ruined all mankind at first; *Ye shall be as gods;* and by pride he still keeps us under his power: hence we read of high and towering imaginations in the heart of man, which "exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ." There is a pride in the heart of man, by nature, which stands directly opposite to the way of salvation by grace: God is willing to give life, but we will needs merit and deserve it: God will have all to be of grace, that boasting may be excluded; but we will have all in a way of debt, that we may have whereof to glory. What, says the proud heart, will ever God give, or shall I take, eternal life for nothing? No, I will not have it, unless God will accept some equivalent, some service or work for it. "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams?" &c. The pride of the heart will set a man at work to do or suffer any thing for life and salvation, rather than believe in Christ, and be saved in a way of grace; as we see in the case of the poor deluded Papists. They will rather quit their kingdoms and thrones, put themselves into monasteries, lie on hair, live on alms, tire themselves with saying the book of Psalms over once every twenty-four hours; and for that end break their sleep, by rising twice or thrice a night, saying so many prayers to the Virgin Mary, and to this and the other saint; they will whip themselves, tear their bodies, go into penances and long pilgrimages: all this, and much more, will they do, for pardon and salvation, rather than take God's method, which is to receive eternal life, as the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Whence comes all this stir, but only from the pride of our hearts, which will stoop to any thing of our own devising, though ever so base and mean, rather than stoop to be saved in a way of grace? That is a strange instance of the pride of the heart, which we have, Rom. x. 3, where it is said of the proud self-righteous Jews, "they went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit unto the righteousness of God." O strange! shall a poor naked beggar, that has not a rag to

cover him, reckon it submission or humility in him to accept of a robe? Shall a condemned malefactor reckon it submission to receive the king's pardon? the captive to accept of liberty? or a man mortally wounded to accept of a healing balm? Yet this is the very case with us: through the pride of our hearts we will not submit to the righteousness of God, but will needs establish a righteousness of our own. Nature, though assisted by external revelation, can never think of another way of salvation than that of the first Adam, namely, by doing and working. To be saved and justified by the doing and dying of another, is a mystery which flesh and blood cannot receive, till the strength of natural pride be broken by the almighty power of God. Men naturally will wear no other garment than that which, like the spider, they spin out of their own bowels. But what says God, Is. lix. 6? "Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works." Man will needs enter into life and glory, by the door of the law, which God has condemned and barred against all mankind since the fall; "for by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Sirs, allow me to tell you, that God never designed to bring man to life by the law, or the works of the law: no, the law of works was only intended as a scaffold, by which he meant to rear up a house of mercy, in which he designed to harbour a company of broken debtors and bankrupts, that they might live upon his charity and grace for ever: and immediately upon the entrance of sin, the scaffold of the law as a covenant was taken down, and broken in pieces. Oh! what devilish pride is it in us, to attempt the rebuilding of the scaffold, that we may climb up to heaven by it, rather than enter the threshold of the house of mercy, which God has resolved *shall be built up for ever!* Psal. lxxxix. 2. Sirs, allow me to tell you, however high you may climb heavenward upon the scaffold of the law, in your own conceit, and in the esteem of others; yet you shall be *cast down into hell*, like Capernaum. Your house being *built upon the sand*, it will *fall*, and *great* will be the *fall thereof*. "The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty; and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted," Is. ii.

4. A pretended humility and self-denial is another great bar in the way of believing to many. They thrust away Christ and the mercy of God from them, under a pretence that they are not fit for it. O! says the man, I am such a hell-deserving sinner, my sins are so great, that I dare not think of coming to Christ; he was never intended for the

like of me. This carries a fair show of humility and self-denial, while it is only a devil of pride, transforming himself into an angel of light. You say you are not worthy of the mercy of God. I answer, It is very true; but then you should consider, that mercy could not be mercy, if you were worthy of it; it would be merit, and not mercy: grace would not be grace, but debt, if you could deserve it. This way of thinking or speaking is quite subversive of a covenant of grace, where Christ, and all the blessings of his purchase, are made over to us, in the form of a testamentary deed, or free gift and legacy. "I will be their God, and they shall be my people: I will take away the stony heart; I will sprinkle them with clean water," &c. In these, and the like absolute and unlimited promises, the grace and favour of God in a Redeemer comes to every man's door, be who or what he will; and by these great and precious promises, we must receive Christ, and apply him in a suitableness to our soul's need, or perish for ever. And to refuse Christ, and his salvation tendered in the word of grace, under this pretext, that we are great sinners, is all one, as if a traitor should refuse his prince's pardon, because he has been in arms against him; or as if one should refuse to accept of a free discharge, because he is a bankrupt, drowned in debt.

5. A secret jealousy, as if God were not in good earnest with us, when he offers Christ and his salvation to us in the gospel. I am afraid that this lies at bottom with many; they do not really believe, that God is willing to bestow his Christ, and salvation through him, upon them, though he be every day calling, commanding, beseeching, and entreating them to embrace him. But, sirs, what else is this, but to charge God with treachery and disingenuousness, as if he said one thing in his word, and intended another in his heart? God says, "He is not willing that you should perish;" yea, he swears by his life, that he has no pleasure in your death, but rather that you turn unto him, through a Redeemer, and live: and yet, to think or say that he is not in good earnest, what else is this, but to make God a liar, yea, to charge him with perjury? And what an insufferable affront is this to a God of truth, for whom "it is impossible to lie?" We cannot offer a greater indignity to a man than to call him a liar; yea, if we but insinuate a jealousy of his veracity and ingenuousness, it is enough to exasperate and enrage his spirits; for "jealousy," says Solomon, "is the rage of a man:" and how, then, shall we imagine that God will sit with it? O, sirs! be persuaded that God speaks the truth in his heart; his words of grace and truth in the scripture, are the sweet picture of his thoughts. And, therefore, beware of harbouring the least

jealousy in your hearts, as if he were not in good earnest when he offers his Christ to you, and commands you to receive him, and his whole salvation.

6. People finding peace and ease in some one thing or other on this side of Christ, is another great cause of unbelief. Perhaps the man has had some challenges and awakenings; upon which, he falls to his prayers, vows, promises, resolutions, to be a better man in time coming, and better servant to God; upon this he finds quiet and ease, and there he rests, without ever coming to the blood of the Lamb. But, sirs, as sure as God lives, this is but a refuge of lies, a hiding place which "the hail shall sweep away." Do not mistake me; I am not dissuading you from duties, but only persuading you not to rest in your duties; let duties be as wagons to carry your souls to Christ, who is *the end of the law*, and of all the duties it enjoins; for when you rest in them as a righteousness or ground of acceptance before God, they become a bar in the way of your coming to Christ, and they prove soul-damning and ruining things, instead of being the causes or means of salvation. And, therefore, go a little farther than these; do not make a plaster of them to heal the wound of conscience; for if your healing do not come from under the wings of the sun of righteousness, the wound will fester, and prove deadly in the issue. Let him only be the well-spring of your comfort, who is the *consolation of Israel*, and in whom all our well-springs are. We read of the brook Cherith, which supplied the prophet Elijah with water, for a time; but, at length, the brook dried up, and he had perished, unless God had brought him to a spring of water. Just so it is with many: they lie for a long time by the brooks of their own duties; and finding some sort of ease and comfort there, conscience is pacified, and they rejoice, because they think God will pity and save them, while they have done as well as they can. But, depend on it, these brooks will dry up, and your souls will starve and perish for ever, if you do not, by faith, come to the fountain opened in the house of David, and draw water out of this well of salvation. O come, sirs, to this open and overflowing fountain: "Whosoever will, let him come, and drink of the waters of life freely:" here you shall find water in the time of the greatest drought, Is. xli. 17: "When the poor and needy seek water," in duties, ordinances, and created comforts, "and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them—I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them." Jer. xvii. 7, 8: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when

heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." So, then, beware of resting on this side of Christ. Many other causes of unbelief might be descanted upon; but I wave them at present.

II. The *second* general head proposed was, to *give some account of the condemnatory sentence passed against this crime of unbelief.* The unbeliever is *condemned already.* Here I shall, 1. Prove that sentence is passed. 2. Show in what courts it is passed. 3. Give some qualities of the sentence.

First, I would prove that sentence is passed against the unbeliever. I need not stand to prove this, when it lies so plain and clear in the text: *He that believeth not, is condemned already.* The word rendered to *condemn,* is forensic, borrowed from courts of justice, where the malefactor, or guilty person, is arraigned and indicted before the judge, his crime made legally evident, and then sentence passed against him, according to the nature and demerit of his crime. So, here, the unbeliever is, as it were, arraigned before the bar of divine justice; process is led against him, and he found guilty of the violation of the royal law of Heaven, and of contemning the glorious remedy provided and offered in the gospel; and, thereupon, sentence goes forth against him, from the mouth of the great Judge, who has "justice and judgment for the habitation of his throne." This man believes not in my Son, and, therefore, I condemn him to death everlasting; he rejects the Saviour of sinners, and, therefore, let him die in his sins; he would needs seek life by the law as a covenant, and, therefore, let the curse of that covenant lie on him for ever. See, to the same purpose, the last verse of this chapter: "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Secondly, I come to tell you in what courts the unbeliever is condemned.

1. Then, he is already condemned in the court of the law as a covenant, by which he is seeking to be justified and saved: Rom. iii. 19: "Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Every unbeliever is upon a law foundation; he is seeking salvation and righteousness by the works of the law, by some good thing or other, which he apprehends to be in him, or done by him, or which he hopes to do. But I may say to you, who are of this law-spirit, as Christ said to the self-righteous Pharisees, John v. 45: "There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust;" where, by Moses, we must understand the law of Moses.

The same say I to you, The law accuseth and condemneth, it is denouncing its heavy anathemas against you, while you cleave to it as a covenant: "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." While you are out of Christ, cleaving to the law as a husband, it lays you under the curse for every and the least failure in obedience. O, sirs! the vengeance of Heaven lies upon you, while you are under the power of unbelief; you are cursed in your basket and store, in soul and body, and all that belongs to you: and the curse not being causeless, it shall come; yea, it cleaves to you, and will cleave to you for ever, unless, by faith, you flee to him who "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

2. The unbeliever is already condemned in the gospel-court. Now, do not mistake this way of speaking, as if, when I speak of the gospel-court, I meant, that the gospel, strictly considered, condemned any man: the gospel, like its glorious Author, "comes not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through" it, "might be saved." Neither do I mean, as if there were new precepts and penalties in the gospel, considered in a strict sense, which were never found in the book or court of the law. This is an assertion which has laid the foundation for a train of damnable and soul-ruining errors; as of the Antinomian error, in discarding the whole moral law as a rule of obedience under the gospel; the Baxterian error, of an evangelical righteousness different from the imputed righteousness of Christ; the Pelagian and Arminian error, of a sufficient grace given to every man that hears the gospel, to believe and repent by his own power. But when I speak of the unbeliever's being condemned in the court of the gospel, my meaning is, that the sentence passed against him in the court of the law, is aggregated and heightened by his contempt of gospel grace. All I intend by it is comprised in that awful word, Heb. ii. 3: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?" or that, Heb. x. 28, 29: "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing?"

3. The unbeliever is condemned already in the court of his own conscience. Conscience is God's deputy and vicegerent, and, in the name and authority of the God of heaven, it keeps a court in every man's breast, and either approves or condemns, accuses or excuses, according to the views and up-

takings that it has to the holy law of God. When the law is only known by conscience, in the letter of it, it condemns only for sins which lie against the letter of the law; but when conscience comes to be irradiated and instructed by the Spirit of God, in the spirituality and extent of the law, then it condemns even for those spiritual wickednesses, that are of a more refined nature, and which lodge in the high places of the soul; of which kind is the sin of unbelief. A natural conscience, even though assisted by external revelation, will smite a man for a thousand sins, before it gives him one check for his unbelief. This seems to be the peculiar province of the Spirit of God, to "convince the world of sin, because they believe not in Christ," John xvi. 8, 9. And, O! when once conscience, by the direction of the Spirit, begins to smite for this sin of unbelief, there is no sin in the world that appears in such a formidable hue; and there is no sin that the worm of conscience will gnaw a man so much for in hell through eternity, than that he had a Saviour in his offer, and yet refused him. In a word, let a man be ever so moral and sober, let him have ever so much seeming peace and quiet, yet he still carries an evil conscience in his breast, till by faith he comes to get his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of sprinkling, Heb. x. 22.

4. The unbeliever is already condemned in the court of the church; or, may I call it, in the ministerial court. Ministers, by virtue of the commission they have received from their great Lord and Master, must "go and preach the gospel to every creature." And having acted according to their commission, they must, in the same authority declare, that he who believes this gospel, shall be saved; he who believeth not, shall be damned. Indeed, this ministerial sentence is but little regarded by a profane and secure world, who are ready to say or think that our words are but wind. But, whether sinners hear or forbear, we must, by our commission, declare to the righteous or believer, "it shall be well with him:" but "wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the rewards of his hands shall be given him." And when this ministerial sentence, whether doctrinal or judicial, is faithfully pronounced, whatever men may think of it, it is ratified in heaven: Matth. xvi. 19: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."

5. The unbeliever is condemned in the court of the great God. It is true, every one of these courts I have mentioned is his; he sits as supreme Judge in each of them: but they are only his inferior courts; and while the sinner's sentence is in dependence before them, there is still access for an ap-

peal by faith to a throne grace, or mercy seat. But when once a man comes to be personally sifted before the bar of God at death or judgment, no farther appeal can be admitted; the man then goes out of mercy's reach; "he that made him will have no mercy upon him;" the things that belonged to his peace are then "for ever hid from his eyes." O that an unbelieving world may lay this to heart in time, before their case become absolutely hopeless and helpless: "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, when there is none to deliver."

Thirdly, I come to give you a few qualities of this sentence of condemnation passed against the unbelieving sinner.

1. It is a most mature and deliberate sentence; the sentence is well advised and ripened, before it is pronounced or executed. "The Lord is a God of judgment," and can do nothing that is rash or precipitate. "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed;" he ponders the crime before he sentences the criminal. It was resolved among the counsels of heaven, from all eternity, that every unbelieving sinner should be condemned to the "lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death," Rev. xxi. 8.

2. It is a most righteous sentence, as will appear when we come to speak of the grounds upon which it proceeds. O, sirs, God will be clear when he judges; yea, so clear, that the guilty panel, before all be done, will be made to subscribe to the equity of the sentence, and own that his blood is upon his own head. As justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Surety, is the foundation of a throne of grace, where the believing sinner is acquitted and absolved; so, vindictive justice and judgment, terminating on the person of the sinner, is the habitation of the throne of justice, where the unbeliever is condemned.

3. It is a most awful and terrible sentence; and it cannot be otherwise, for it is pronounced by a terrible Judge: "With God is terrible majesty. He cutteth off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth." The sentence goes forth from a terrible tribunal, a bench clothed with red vengeance. The nature of the sentence itself is terrible, for it is a sentence of condemnation. To be condemned to a natural or bodily death, is terrible; but to be condemned to eternal death, to be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from [or by] the glory of his power," has a terror in it, that surpasses expression and imagination.

4. When the sentence comes to be uttered by God against the unbeliever, personally compeering before his tribunal,

upon the back of death, it becomes an irrevocable sentence, which shall never be repealed through eternity; it stands ratified for ever: as the tree falls, so will it lie; for God's loving-kindness is not declared in the grave, nor his faithfulness in the land of darkness.

III. The *third* thing in the method was, to *inquire into the grounds of this condemnatory sentence.* And, among many others, I shall instance in the few following.

1. The unbeliever is condemned already, because, by his unbelief he has offered the highest indignity to a Trinity of persons in the glorious Godhead, that a creature is capable of. He despises the love of the Father, who, out of his good-will and kindness to a lost world, "gave his only begotten Son." He gives him to be incarnate; he gives him to death; and gives him and his whole purchase in the revelation of the gospel, "that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." But now the unbeliever despises all the riches of this grace and love, and practically says, that the unspeakable gift of God is not worthy to be taken up at his foot. And as he despises the love of the Father, so he tramples upon the blood of the Son, as if it were an unholy thing. He says, upon the matter, that Christ shed his blood in vain; hence, unbelievers are said to "crucify the Son of God afresh:" they react the bloody tragedy that was once acted upon Mount Calvary; and, upon the same account, the unbelieving communicant is said to be "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." Again, the unbelieving sinner sins against the Holy Ghost. I do not mean that every unbeliever is guilty of the unpardonable sin, for then there would be no need of preaching the gospel to them. But I mean, that every believer, in rejecting Christ, runs directly cross to the work and office of the Spirit, in the economy of redemption. It is the office of the Spirit to *convince the world of sin, because they believe not in Christ;* but the man is so far from owning this, that he practically denies unbelief to be any sin at all. It is the office of the Spirit to *convince of righteousness;* that is, of the necessity and excellency of the righteousness of Christ for justification: but the unbeliever goes about to establish a righteousness of his own, and will not submit to this righteousness of God. It is the office of the Spirit to glorify Christ, to "take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us:" But the unbeliever, upon the matter, says, "There is no form nor comeliness in him, why he should be desired." Thus, I say, the unbeliever affronts a whole Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and therefore he is condemned already.

2. The unbeliever is condemned already, because he has injured all the glorious attributes and perfections of the divine

nature. He rebels against awful and adorable majesty and sovereignty. The authority of God is, in a peculiar manner, interposed in the command of believing; God speaks of this command as if he had never given another command to the sons of men, 1 John iii. 23: "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Now, the unbeliever flies in the face of all this authority, saying, with proud Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" Let the Almighty depart from me; for I desire not the knowledge of his ways. Again; the man makes a mock of the master-piece of Infinite Wisdom, as though it were nothing but arrant folly. The device of salvation through a Redeemer, is *the wisdom of God in a mystery;* it is *hidden wisdom:* but the unbeliever, with the Greeks, calls it *foolishness;* and, with the Athenians, looks on it as mere *babbling*, when it is brought out in a gospel revelation. The unbeliever also spurns against the bowels of infinite and amazing love; yea, as it were, runs a spear into the bowels of a compassionate God, which are sending out a sound after him: "O turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die? As I live, I have no pleasure in your death." He dares and challenges Omnipotence to its worst, while he refuses to take sanctuary in Christ, and to turn in to the strong hold, where he may be sheltered from the storm, wind, and tempest of divine vengeance. He laughs at the shaking of God's spear, and the whetting of his glittering sword. He gives the lie also to the veracity of God, 1 John v. 10: "He that believeth not God. hath made him a liar:" not as if he could do so indeed; for God will be true, and every man a liar: but the unbeliever does what he can to make God a liar. This is the language of his sin, God is a liar, he is not to be trusted, there is no truth in his words. Which is blasphemy in the highest degree. Thus, I say, the unbelieving sinner injures God in all his glorious excellencies. And is it any wonder then though he be condemned already?

3. Another ground of this awful sentence is, because the man counteracts, and runs directly cross to the most glorious designs that ever God had in view; I mean, his designs in the work of redemption through Christ. I shall only clear this in two or three instances. (1.) God's design in redemption was the illustration and manifestation of his own glorious excellencies, which were sullied or obscured by the sin of man: but the unbeliever, as was showed just now, does his utmost to darken and affront every one of them. (2.) God's design is, that in all things Christ should have the pre-eminency; that he should have "a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." But, now, the

unbeliever, like the devil, being lifted up with pride, refuses to bow or submit to that name, JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, *The Lord our righteousness*, Jer. xxiii. 6, Rom. x. 3. He refuses to own or bow unto that royal name written upon his thigh and vesture, Rev. xix. 16. The KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS. He joins in a confederacy with those who refuse to stoop to his royal sceptre, saying, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us," Psal. ii. 3. (3.) God's design in redemption is, that grace only should reign, and that all ground of boasting and gloriation should be cut off from man for ever, so as he that glorieth may glory only in the Lord. But, now, the unbeliever's language is, Not grace but self shall reign. He chooses rather to be damned for ever, than submit to grace's government, "reigning through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." What, says the man, will not "God be pleased with thousands of rams?" &c. If God will give him life for some equivalent, some good thing wrought in him or by him, he is content; but to take it for nothing, as the gift of free grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, this is too low a bargain for his proud heart to stoop to. And for this pride of his heart, which makes him to run cross to God's glorious designs in redemption, he is condemned already.

4. He is condemned already, because his sin (I mean his unbelief) is of a more criminal nature, in God's reckoning, than any other sin that can be named or thought upon. The sin of Adam, in eating the forbidden fruit, was a most aggravated crime. For a creature newly dropped out of his Creator's fingers, a creature dignified with the lively image of God upon him, exalted to sovereignty over this lower world, having all things put under his feet: I say, for such a creature, upon a slender temptation, to turn his back on God, and cast himself into the devil's arms, to ruin himself and the whole tribe of mankind at one blow; this, no doubt, was a most crying sin. But yet the sin of unbelief far surpasses it: for our first parents sinned only against God as a Creator; but the unbeliever sins against him as a Redeemer, consequently, he sins against more love than they could sin against, before the revelation of Christ. Again; unbelief is more criminal than the sin of the Jews in crucifying of the Lord of glory; they crucified him when veiled and disguised under the form of a servant; but the unbeliever crucifies him upon his throne, when the evidences of his being the true Messiah are completed by his resurrection from the dead, Rom. i. 4. It would be a crime of a far more capital nature, to maltreat a king sitting on the throne, with all his nobles about him, than to maltreat him when under a disguise, sitting upon the

dunghill with a company of beggars about him: yet the former is the case with the unbeliever. Again; unbelief is worse than the sin of Sodom, which provoked God to rain hell out of heaven upon its inhabitants. Christ tells us that Sodom and Gomorrah will have a cold hell in comparison of those who have had the offers of a Saviour in the gospel, and yet have rejected him. Matth. xi. 24: "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for" Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and other cities where Christ had preached. Again; all the sins of the blinded nations are not comparable to the sin of unbelief. We have a black roll of their sins, Rom. i. toward the close: but yet Christ speaks of them as no sins, in comparison of the sin of those who remain in unbelief under the drop of the gospel: "If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." Witchcraft is a very monstrous sin; for a man or woman to enter into compact with the devil, and give themselves soul and body to be his for ever: and yet the unbeliever does the same upon the matter; for he is in league with hell, and with death is he at an agreement. I remember, the rebellion of Saul against the express command of God, ordering him utterly to destroy the Amalekites, is compared to the sin of witchcraft, 1 Sam. xv. 23. Now, the unbeliever (as was said) rebels against the greatest command that was ever issued out from the throne of the Majesty on high. I shall only add, that unbelief is a sin attended with aggravations which are not to be found in the sin of devils. The devil never rejected a Saviour, as the unbeliever does; for "he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." Some think that the devil, and his angels who joined him, were cast out of heaven for refusing to be subject to God in man's nature, when intimation of this design was made in heaven. No doubt he would have been well enough pleased to subject himself to God, manifesting himself in the nature of angels; but to be subject to "God manifested in the flesh," he looked upon it as a disparagement. But the unbeliever rejects God appearing in his own nature, saying, "We will not have this man to rule over us." Is it any wonder, then, though the unbeliever be condemned already?

5. He is condemned already, because unbelief is the spring and ringleader of all other sins. Every sin is a turning away from the living God: and whence comes this, but from an evil heart of unbelief? Heb. iii. 12. The name of the sin of unbelief may be *Gad*, for a troop doth follow it. Why are men proud? why are their hearts lifted up within them, as if they were "rich, and increased with goods, and stood in

need of nothing?" Why, the reason is, they do not believe the verdict of the Spirit of God concerning them, that they are indeed "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Why are men covetous? why have they the world set in their hearts, but because they do not believe that Christ is a better good than this world, and the things of it? Why are men uncharitable to the poor, but because they do not believe that what is given to the poor is lent to the Lord, and that he will pay it again? Why are men secure in a way of sin, crying, Peace, peace, but because they do not believe that wrath and destruction from the Lord is pursuing them? Why is the blessed Bible so much slighted and neglected by many, like an almanack out of date, but because they do not believe it to be the word of God, or that eternal life is to be found therein? Why do people generally hear us, who are ministers, preaching the everlasting gospel, with such raving hearts and careless ears, but because they do not believe that we are ambassadors for Christ, and that God doth beseech them by us to be reconciled unto him? Why do many live in the neglect of prayer? Why are they so formal, heartless, and careless in prayer, but because they do not believe God to be the hearer of prayer? Why are there so many hypocrites, contenting themselves with a show of religion, but because they do not believe there is a reality in religion, and that God searches the heart and tries the reins? Why do men remain under the power of natural enmity, but because they do not believe that "God is love," 1 John iv. 16; and that, through the ransom he has found, he bears a hearty good-will toward them? Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Whence comes that flood of profanity, which, like Jordan, has overrun all banks and bounds in our day, such as cursing, swearing, cheating, lying, Sabbath-breaking, thefts, robberies, forgeries, and the like abominations! Why, the plain reason is, they do not believe there is a God, or that ever they shall stand before his tribunal to answer for the deeds done in the body. The plain language of the heart of unbelief is, "The Lord doth not see, neither doth the God of Jacob regard;" and therefore they give themselves loose reins in a way of sin.

To conclude this head, unbelief is the principal pillar of the devil's kingdom in the world, and in the soul of man. Let this pillar be but broken, and all his strong holds go to ruin. Faith is the radical grace which gives life and spirit to all the other graces: it is the spring of all true gospel-obedience, therefore called *the obedience of faith:* so, in like manner, unbelief is the radical sin, which gives life and spirit to all vicious habits and acts of disobedience in the life and

conversation. Faith is a shield that beats back the fiery darts of Satan; so unbelief is a shield that beats back all the good motions of the Spirit of God. Faith is the victory by which we overcome the world; unbelief is the victory by which the world overcomes us. After all, is it any wonder though such a severe sentence pass against the unbelieving sinner, as that in my text, *He that believeth not, is condemned already?*

IV. The *fourth* and *last* thing proposed, was the *application*, which I shall endeavour to discuss in a few inferences.

Inf. 1. See hence a very relevant reason, why ministers of the gospel harp so much upon the subject of faith or believing. Why, it is for unbelief, that sinners are condemned already; and there is no way to free them from this sentence, but by bringing them to believe in the Son of God. Unbelief is the main pillar of the devil's kingdom; and therefore the main batteries of the gospel must be raised against it. It is but at best a foolish ignorant cavil of some against ministers, Why so much insisting upon faith? are not other things as necessary to be preached? I answer, Other things are necessary in their own place, but faith or believing in the first place: and till we bring you to believe, we do nothing at all, this being the laying of the foundation of all religion; and, you know, it is foolish to think or speak of rearing up a superstructure, till the foundation be once laid. Can we ever make you accepted of God without faith in his Son? No, surely, "Without faith it is impossible to please him:" we are "justified by faith without the works of the law." Can we ever make you the members of Christ without faith? No, this is the very bond of the soul's union with him; "Christ dwells in our hearts by faith." Can we ever make you the children of God who are by nature the children of wrath, without faith? No, "We are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." It is to them who *receive him* that *he gives power* or privilege *to become the sons of God*, John i. 12. Let us press and inculcate the duties of holiness with ever such flourishing harangues of rhetoric, we shall never make you holy, till we once land you in Christ by faith, he being the fountain and root of holiness; therefore said to be "made of God unto us sanctification." In one word, whatever duties we inculcate upon you, we only call you to build castles in the air, to build a tower without a bottom, unless we first bring you to Christ by that faith which is of God's operation.

Inf. 2. See hence the miserable and mournful condition of the generality of gospel-hearers; they are a company of condemned men, under sentence of death. O that God may dart home an arrow of conviction on the hearts of unbelieving

sinners, and persuade them of the truth of my doctrine, that every unbeliever is condemned already. I am sure it is true, whether you believe it or not; and you shall find it to be so, sooner or later. O sirs! here is a hand-writing against you, that may make the joints of your loins to loosen, and your knees to smite one against another: HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT, IS CONDEMNED ALREADY. And, that I may, if possible, awaken you to some serious thought and concern about this matter, will you consider whose sentence it is? It is none other than God's sentence of condemnation. It is somewhat awful and terrible, to be arraigned and condemned at the bar of man; what then must it be to be condemned at JEHOVAH'S bar? The Judge is omniscient; "his eyes are as a flame of fire;" he "setteth our secret sins in the light of his countenance," so that the crime cannot be concealed from him: his justice is unbiassed; his eye cannot be blinded with bribes: the arm of his power cannot be stayed from the execution of the sentence. What a fearful thing is it to fall into the hands of this living God? He is indeed *a consuming fire*. The solemnity of the bench adds terror to the criminal; and you may see with what solemnity the bench is to be reared, before which you and I must stand ere long, Matth. xxv. 31: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." O! whither will the unbeliever fly for help? or where will he leave his glory at that day? If hills and mountains could cover him, he would choose far rather to be buried under them, than appear before the face of the Lamb, when he comes to ride his circuit as the universal Judge of all the earth. You may read your doom, Matth. xxv. 41: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The sentence being passed, there can be no stop in the execution; the Judge will have his officers at hand, an innumerable host of angels, all ready for this service: these reapers shall gather the tares, bind them in bundles, and burn them. The Judge will stand and see the sentence executed before his face, saying, "Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me," Luke xix. 27. Among all the innumerable multitudes of angels, men, and devils, who shall be spectators of the righteous execution, there shall be no eye to pity; and the reason is, because the sinner wilfully, through unbelief, slighted Christ the only Saviour, and refused to accept of pardon and redemption through his blood. Who will pity the traitor, who dies for his treason, rejecting his prince's pardon presented to him to the last? Christ would have gathered you, as the hen gathers her chickens under

her wings, and ye would not; and therefore ye must die without pity, and without remedy.

Inf. 3. See hence how fitly the gospel is called a joyful sound, Psal. lxxxix. 15: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." Among other reasons why it gets that denomination, this is none of the least; it brings a proclamation of life to the sons of death, a sound of liberty to the captive, and of pardon to the poor sinner condemned already. One would think that the very hint of a pardon to a condemned criminal, would make his heart to leap within him for joy: but, alas! sad experience tells us, that the gospel, which brings such "glad tidings of great joy" to condemned sinners, meets with a very cool reception from the generality, Is. liii. 1: "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

Inf. 4. See hence how ill-grounded the joy and triumph of a Christless unbelieving world is. We would think that man beside himself, who, being under sentence of death, and to be brought forth in a little to the place of execution, would spend any little time he has, in eating, drinking, dancing, and revelling. Yet this is the very case with the generality; they take up the timbrel and harp, rejoice at the sound of the organ; they spend their days in wealth and ease, without ever thinking that they are condemned already by the great God. All I shall say, to stop your career at present, is this: The triumphing of the *unbelieving sinner* is short, and *his* joy but for a moment. You may, indeed, "kindle a fire, and compass yourselves about with sparks: but this shall ye have of the Lord's hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow," Is. l. 11.

Inf. 5. See hence how much we are obliged to Christ, who came to save us from this heavy sentence of death we were under: "He came not into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." He himself was condemned, that we might be acquitted. Judgment passed upon him, that it might not pass against us. He was made a curse, to redeem us from the curse of the law. When Adam had entailed death and condemnation upon us, and all his posterity; Christ comes, and by his obedience to death, cuts off that entail, procuring our justification. "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life," Rom. v. 18. O believer, acknowledge thy obligations to the Son of God; for if he, as thy Surety, had not paid thy debt, thou hadst been condemned to the prison of hell for it for ever.

Inf. 6. See hence that it is every man's duty and interest to examine and try, whether he be under this heavy sentence,

yea, or not. It is a miserable thing to be under sentence of death, and to know nothing of it. Neither will a man ever seek to be freed from it, till he be convinced that he is indeed under it. I shall give you the few following characters of such as are under sentence of condemnation.

1*st*, You who never yet saw yourselves to be condemned in the court of the law and conscience for sin, and particularly for the sin of unbelief, you are surely under sentence of death to this day; for the first work of the Spirit, when he comes to liberate a poor soul from condemnation, is to "convince the world of sin; of sin, because they believe not on him," John xvi. 8, 9.

2*dly*, You whose minds are so blinded with ignorance and prejudice against Christ, that you "can see no form or comeliness in him," notwithstanding of the bright displays of his glory that are made to us in the word. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

3*dly*, You, who are yet wedded to the law as a covenant, and are seeking life and righteousness by that first husband, you are, to this moment, under the sentence of death; for, "as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse." If you never knew what it is to be dead to the law by the body of Christ, to have as little hope of life and salvation by the law and its works, as though you had never done any one duty commanded by the law in your whole life, you are yet married to the law as a husband, consequently, under the law's sentence. Yea, I will adventure to say, that the legalist, or self-righteous person, is a step farther off from heaven and eternal life, than the grossest of sinners; for "publicans and harlots," says Christ, "shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before you."

4*thly*, You who cast off the obligation of the law as a rule of obedience, under a pretended hope of being saved by grace, without the works of the law. All practical Antinomians, who are following the swing of their own lusts, are under the power of unbelief, and consequently condemned already. Away with lying, swearing, drinking, whoring believers. Will you pretend to be the people of a holy God, the members of a holy Jesus, the federates of a holy covenant, the heirs of an undefiled inheritance, and yet wallow in your sins, or yet retain any known iniquity in your hearts? No, no. To such, not I, but God himself saith, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and

castest my words behind thee." O sirs, they that are dead to the law as a covenant, are so far from casting off its obligations as a rule of duty, that they bind it about them as an ornament, choosing it for a light to their feet, and a lamp to their paths. We are not without law to God, when under the law to Christ. The law is so dear and sweet to a true believer, that it is his meditation day and night. *O how love I thy law!* says David: as if he had said, I love it so well, that I cannot tell how well I love it: "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times," Psal. cxix. 20.

Inf. 7. Is it so that every unbeliever is a condemned criminal before God? O, then, be concerned at your hearts to get rid of that dismal sentence you are under. What can be matter of concern, if this be not? I come, in the name of God, to tell you, that this is not impossible; yea, I dare go farther, and tell you, that if you will but *hear, your souls shall live*, and not die under that condemnatory sentence which is gone forth against you. I dare promise you not only a reprieve, but a remission; for thus saith the great Judge, as a reconciled God in Christ, to the poor trembling panel, standing condemned before the bar of his holy law; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins," Is. xliii. 25. Here is an act of grace passed at a throne of grace, sealed with the blood of the Lamb, published and proclaimed in the tops of the high places, that none may pretend ignorance, and that every condemned sinner may take the benefit of it, and come in upon the King's royal indemnity, granted upon the satisfaction made to justice by his eternal Son. O, then, sirs, "Hear, and your souls shall live, and he will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David," Is. lv. 3: "O earth, earth, earth, hear this word of the Lord."

I come not to tell you how you may be rich, great, and honourable in the world; these things are but trifles to people in your circumstances. Should you come to a condemned man, and talk to him of riches, honours, crowns, robes, sceptres, and kingdoms: Alas! would he be ready to say, what is all that to me? I am a poor man going into another world within a few hours; if you can tell me how I may save my life, or how I may get rid of my sentence, chains, prison, you will say something to the purpose. This is the very case with thee, O sinner; for "by the offence of one, judgment is come upon all men to condemnation." And, therefore, O poor criminal, listen, lend me a believing ear for a few moments, and I will tell thee how infallibly thou shalt make thy escape.

Quest. O, may the poor criminal say, how is that? I answer, I have no advice to give thee but one; it is an old advice, a new advice, and the only advice that can be given while the world stands; it is the very same which Paul and Silas gave to a poor panel, trembling at God's bar, crying, "What must I do to be saved?" The plain advice they gave him, I give this day to you, Acts xvi. 31: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved:" agreeably to which are the words of Christ himself, in the first part of the verse, where my text lies, "He that believeth on the Son of God is not condemned;" and verse 16: "Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Quest. You advise us to believe in Christ; but pray tell us what is it to believe in him? You have the answer in your Catechism: To believe, is to "receive Christ, and to rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel;" or, in other words, it is to trust and credit him, as the Saviour of sinners, with the salvation of thy lost soul, upon the warrant of his own call and command in the word. Christ's business and occupation is to save that which was lost. Now, you all know what it is to trust a man in his trade and occupation; you who have some business at law, know what it is to trust your advocates with your most valuable concerns, and the whole management of your cause depending before the judges. Well, in like manner, to believe, is, upon the credit of God's testimony concerning Christ in the word, to trust him, as the Saviour of sinners, with the salvation of thy own soul in particular. This, I say, is the business, the office, and occupation of Christ, to save sinners; and he is so fond of employment in his trade of saving, that he says, "Come to me who will, I will in no wise cast out." And, therefore, trust in him in his occupation; put thy condemned soul in the hands of the sinner's Saviour, for that is to believe in him and on him. O, what a happy suitable meeting is it, when the sinner and the Saviour of sinners thus meet together! Some have a notion, when we bid them believe, we bid them do some great thing as the condition of salvation. But this is a mistake. Believing is a resting from works in point of salvation, and a resting on Christ alone for salvation from sin, and all the effects of it. It is to receive a salvation already completed and prepared to your hand, and brought near to you in the word of grace. But I must not stand farther in describing faith at present.

Quest. What influence (may you say) will our believing have upon our being delivered from this condemnatory sentence we are under? *Answ.* Much every way. For,

1. That moment thou believest, thou becomest a member of Christ, as a new covenant head. While under the power of unbelief, thou art a member of the first Adam, and consequently under Adam's covenant, which is a cursing and condemning covenant to all who are under it, "judgment being come upon all men to condemnation," through Adam's breach of it; but in believing, thou becomest a member of Christ, the second Adam, the head of the new covenant, the covenant of grace and promise, which contains nothing but blessings to the soul that takes hold of it, Rom. viii. 1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." It is not said, there is nothing culpable or condemnable in the believer; but there is no condemnation to him; he is no more liable to the penalties of Adam's covenant, Christ, his glorious Surety, having endured these in his room and stead; and it were inconsistent with justice, to demand payment of the same debt, both from the cautioner and principal debtor.

2. To clear this yet farther, the poor soul, in believing, is married to a new husband, even Christ; and being under his roof, the covert of his blood and righteousness, the condemning law can have no action against it, this new and better husband having made his spouse free indeed, by the imputation of his law-magnifying righteousness: Rom. vii. 4: "Ye are dead to the law by the body of Christ (or, by the offering of his body on the cross,) that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead." He does that for us, which the law could not do, through the corruption of nature; particularly, "condemns sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And if the law have its end, and be fulfilled in the believer, by virtue of his union and marriage with the Son of God, how can he be liable to condemnation, or any law penalties?

3. That moment the condemned sinner believes in Christ, he is entered heir of a new family, a member of a new corporation: he is come, not to Mount Sinai, but to Mount Zion; not to the earthly Jerusalem, which is in bondage, but to the heavenly Jerusalem, which is free. He is "no more a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God." He comes in among the "general assembly, and church of the first-born." He becomes an "heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ;" and the inheritance is settled upon him by a charter, which contains no irritant clauses. No, no: having *taken hold of God's covenant* by faith, he hath *a name and a place within the walls*

of God's *house*, even *an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off;* and therefore must needs be free from the condemnatory sentence he lay under before he believed.

4. That moment you believe, your cause is carried into a new court; I mean, from a tribunal of justice to a mercy-seat, where all the acts and interlocutors that pass are acts of grace and mercy, acts of pardon and acceptance in the beloved. No sentences of condemnation pass in the court of grace: no; this is inconsistent with the nature of the court. O let every guilty sinner, who finds himself condemned in the court of the law, and of conscience, carry his cause, by a solemn appeal, to this court; for the court is open to all comers, and the Lord merciful and gracious, who sits upon this throne of grace, receives all appeals that are made to him, and will in no wise cast out the sinner, or cast his appeal over bar. O, therefore, "let us come with boldness unto a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need."

Quest. But (may you say) if matters stand thus with a believer, that he cannot fall under the sentence of the law, cannot come into condemnation, then he may live as he lists. Does not this doctrine open a wide door for licentiousness and profanity? for if once a man be a believer, according to this doctrine, he has nothing to fear, and so may do what he will. Were it not better for ministers to forbear doctrines that are liable to such abuse? I answer,

1. The whole counsel of God must be revealed, and not one hoof of divine truth must be suppressed, though a whole reprobate world should break their necks on it, by wresting it to their own destruction. The gospel will be the savour of death unto some; Christ crucified will be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. But shall we, because of this, forbear to preach Christ, and his gospel? God forbid; we must not starve God's children, out of fear lest dogs snatch at it to their own perdition.

2. I own, that a carnal gospeller, who has some swimming notions of the grace of God in his head, may abuse the doctrine of the believer's freedom from condemnation by virtue of his union with Christ: but the grace of God in the heart teaches the very reverse of this, namely, to "deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

3. Though the believer be delivered from the law as a covenant, and its condemnatory sentence, through Christ, yet it does not in the least pave a way to licentiousness; because at the same time that he is assoilzied and acquitted from his obligation to the law as a covenant, he comes under stronger

and more powerful ties than ever to yield obedience to it as a rule of duty.

I shall conclude this discourse, by naming a few of these bonds of obedience the believer remains under, even when delivered from condemnation.

1*st*, He is still under the bond of the royal authority of the great God, both as a Creator and Redeemer. The authority and obligation of the divine law can never be dissolved, while God is God, and the creature a creature.

2*dly*, He is under the bond of interest, to obey the divine law. It is true, his obedience does not give him the title to the reward of glory; it is only his union with Christ, the heir of all things, that gives him this; but yet his own personal obedience is evidential and declarative of his title through Christ. And is it not much for the believer's interest, to have his claim to glory and everlasting life cleared up and made evident to his own soul? In this sense I understand that word, Rev. xxii. 14: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

3*dly*, He is still under the bond of fear; Jer. xxxii. 40: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." This is not a slavish fear of hell and vindictive wrath, for that is inconsistent with his freedom from condemnation: but is a filial fear of God as a Father, flowing from an affectionate regard to his authority, interposed in the commands of the law. Though they be not afraid of being cast into hell; yet they "fear him who is able to cast soul and body into hell." Though they have no reason to fear him as an avenging and condemning Judge; yet they have much reason to fear him as a fatherly Judge, lest he "visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes;" for, pass who will unpunished, they shall not pass: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

4*thly*, He is under the bond of love. He studies to love the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind; and this love of God in Christ, like a strong cord, draws him on in the way of obedience, "I drew them with the cords of love:" "The love of Christ constraineth us," says Paul. This love laid in the believer's heart has such a force and power with it, "that many waters cannot quench it, neither are all floods able to drown it," Cant. viii. 7; Rom. viii. 35, 39.

5*thly*, He is under the bond of gratitude; being bought with a price, he studies to glorify God in soul and body, which are his. Christ having delivered him from the hand

of his enemies, he serves the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of his life. The believer, when delivered from the hand of the condemning law, says to Christ, as the men of Israel did to Gideon, Judg. viii. 22: "Rule thou over us; for thou hast delivered us from the hand of our enemies." Suppose a king should not only pardon a rebel, but restore him his forfeited inheritance, advance him to the highest places of honour about the throne; yea, make him his son, his heir, and set him upon the throne with himself: would not that man be under a far greater obligation to serve and obey the king, than if he had never received such singular favours at his hand? There is no bond of obedience like the bond of gratitude to an ingenuous spirit.

6*thly*, He is under the bond of a renewed nature. The man is made a partaker of the divine nature, by which the life of God, the love of God, and the law of God, is laid in his very heart; and this is a mighty bond to obedience: Heb. viii. 10: "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." It is engraved there with the finger of the Holy Ghost: his heart is cast into a divine mould, moulded into the will of God, his will of grace, his will of precept, and his will of providence; so that he "delights in the law of God, after the inward man. The law of his God is in his heart," and therefore "none of his steps shall slide."

Lastly, The inhabitation of the Holy Ghost is another efficacious bond to obedience: Ezek. xxxvi. 27: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." This law of the Spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, makes them "free from the law of sin and death." And being *led by the Spirit*, they do not *fulfil the lusts of the flesh*. To conclude, that very grace of God which frees them from the law as a covenant, binds them to it as a rule, Tit. ii. 11, 12.

These are some gospel bonds of obedience: and you who never knew what it is to have your souls under the sweet influence of these, but only obey the law with a view to purchase a title to heaven, or to redeem your souls from hell and wrath, I, in the name of God, pronounce the heavy doom of my text against you, *He that believeth not, is condemned already.*

SERMON XIV.

THE DAY-SPRING FROM ON HIGH.*

Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us.—LUKE I. 78.

THESE words are a part of the prophetic song of Zacharias, concerning the person, kingdom, and glory of Christ. The man was filled with the Holy Ghost, and this made his "tongue like the pen of a ready writer" to proclaim the praises of our glorious Immanuel. Whenever the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon a soul, his great work is to glorify Christ. Time will not allow me to insist in opening up the connexion. Only, in a word, Zacharias having spoken of John Baptist as the harbinger of the glorious Messiah, he tells us what would be his province and peculiar work, ver. 77: "To give the knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of sins," or for the remission of sins; that is, to open up the way how guilty sinners may come to be justified through the righteousness of Christ, this being the only way of salvation from the wrath of God, and the curse of the broken law. And if any should ask, How comes it about that salvation and remission of sins should be published to a guilty lost world? You have a very apposite answer to this inquiry in the words of my text: it is, *Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us.*

Where notice, (1.) How the manifestation of Christ, as the Saviour, is expressed; it is called, *The day-spring from on high.* (2.) The moving cause of this manifestation of Christ: it is, *Through the tender mercy of our God*, or, as in the margin, *the bowels of his mercy.* O sirs, it was not the works of righteousness that we had done, or were to do, that laid God under an obligation to send his Son into the world; no, no, it was the working of his own heart, the rolling of his own bowels of love and pity to perishing sinners, John iii. 16: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life." It is observable here, that Zacharias does not simply say, *the tender mercies of God;* but, *through the tender*

* Preached immediately before the celebration of the Lord's supper, at Portmoak, June 2, 1728.

mercies, or *bowels, of our God.* This is the ordinary way of faith; whenever it views God as a God of mercy in Christ, it lays claim to him, it applies and appropriates him; this being the echo of faith to the covenant-grant, "I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." But now, if it should be asked, What way have the bowels of mercy vented themselves to us? what is the issue of them? Why, says he, *Through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us.* As if he had said, By the manifestation of his eternal Son in our nature, and the gracious approach that he has made to us in him, he has dispelled these dark and black clouds of wrath that were hovering over our heads. "We that sat in darkness, saw great light; and to us that sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." Some render the words of the text, *the sun-rising from on high*, others, *the branch-spring from on high hath visited us.* I shall follow our own translation, *the day-spring from on high hath visited us.* The words will be farther clear in speaking to the following observation:

OBSERV. "That Christ's approaches in a way of grace make a joyful day of salvation to spring from on high upon a miserable world. *The day-spring from on high hath visited us.*— Hence it is that Christ is sometimes called *the light of the world;* sometimes, *the Sun of righteousness;* sometimes, *the bright and morning Star;* and *his goings forth are prepared as the morning.*"

Method,

I. To inquire what this text and doctrine supposes.

II. Notice a few of the visits of this day-spring.

III. Why his visits are likened to the spring of the day.

IV. What sort of a day springs up when Christ visits the soul.

V. Why this day is said to spring *from on high.*

VI. Apply the whole.

I. The *first* thing is, to *inquire what is implied in the expression in the text, The day-spring from on high hath visited us.*

1. It supposes Adam's posterity to be in a dark, lonely, and miserable condition, before Christ visits them from on high. What the condition of the old creation was before the forming of light, that is man's before Christ pays him a visit: the old creation was "without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep;" so is man: man is *without form or comeliness*, a mass of darkness, and disorder, and misery.— As the darkness of the night overspreads the face of the earth

before the spring of day, so a melancholy night of darkness overspreads all the children of men. Immediately upon the entry of sin, a curtain, a veil, was drawn between God and man, by the justice and holiness of God, till it was rent again by the death and blood of a Redeemer. Oh, what darkness was upon our first parents before Christ was revealed in the first promise! such a darkness as caused horror and trembling, and flying in among the thickets of paradise. There is a manifold darkness that sin has brought upon man: a darkness of ignorance; the eyes of the understanding are dashed out by the fall, that we cannot know, cannot receive the things of God: a darkness of error, full of mistaken notions about God and the things of God; we naturally change the truth of God into a lie, put darkness for light, and light for darkness: a darkness of enmity and prejudice against God; we are "enmity against God, and alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us." The very darkness of death is upon us; we "sit in the regions and shadow of death," Matth. iv.: the darkness of a legal death, being "condemned already, and the wrath of God abiding on us:" the darkness of spiritual death, being *without God*, and consequently without life, "in the world, dead in trespasses and sins, like the slain that lie in the grave." Now, sirs, this is your condition and mine by nature, before Christ comes in a way of grace to us, making the day-spring from on high to visit us.

2. *The day-spring from on high hath visited us;* it supposes Christ to be the glorious Sun, whose coming brings light along with him: Mal. iv. 2: "Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." All the stars in the firmament, and constellations of the heavenly bodies, cannot make day till the sun arise; so neither could all the angels of heaven afford the least glimmering of comfort or relief to a lost world, till the Son of God came and paid us a visit; he alone is "the God of salvation, to whom belong the issues from death."

3. The text implies, that Christ coming upon this errand, for our salvation, was unconstrained and voluntary: a visit is a free and voluntary thing without any manner of force.—What is said of the natural sun, Psal. xix. 5, that he "rejoiceth as a strong man to run his race," is much more true of Christ the sun of righteousness; he "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men." And as the sun in the firmament, with the greatest freedom, scatters his beams through the world, so does Christ scatter the rays and beams of his grace and love among sinners in the dispensation of the everlasting gospel. And when he comes by his Spirit, either in a day of conversion, or of a

renewed manifestation of himself to a believer, it is with delight and pleasure that he does it: "Behold he cometh," says the spouse, "leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills."

4. The text implies, that Christ's visits are wonderful, sweet and acceptable. What can be more desirable than the spring of day, after a dark, long, and melancholy night? "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." Oh, will the soul say, when Christ comes, welcome, welcome, welcome, ten thousand times welcome, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord to save us." O sirs, never did Christ come yet to visit, but he brought welcome with him: "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him,—we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation."

5. The text implies an infinite disparity between the party visiting and the party visited; hence the day-spring is *from on high.* O sirs, we were brought low by our iniquities, lying upon the very confines of hell; and therefore when Christ, who lay in his Father's bosom from eternity, when he "who inhabits eternity, and dwells in the high and holy place," comes to visit us, he must humble and abase himself to meet us; he leaves the upper regions of glory, to dwell or tabernacle with us upon earth. Hence we are told, that though he was "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Thus, you see what the text and doctrine imply.

II. The *second* thing is, to *notice some of the gracious visits of Christ, or gradual advances of this day-spring from on high.*

1. Then, there was the early visit that he made us in his eternal purpose from the ancient years of eternity, before ever the world was made: Mic. v. 2: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Which last words may either denote the eternal generation of the Son; he was begotten of his Father from eternity, being the same eternal, independent, self-existent God with him: or it may point out his eternal destination by the Father to be the Redeemer and Saviour of lost sinners; agreeable to which is that of Christ, Prov. viii. 23: "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." This was, as it were, his first motion towards us, though, as yet, at a great and inconceivable distance. O sirs, wonder at this wonderful grace and love of God, that paid us a visit when he saw us in our blood, and before we

had any other being save in his own decree! "When I saw thee in thy blood, I said unto thee, Live."

2. There is a visit that he made us in our first parents after the fall, when he told them, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent." This was, as it were, the first peep of day-light on a lost world of mankind. As I was saying just now, no sooner had man sinned, but a dark and dismal night of wrath from the Lord of hosts did overspread our horizon, which struck our first parents with such horror, that they endeavoured to hide themselves among the bushes of Paradise: even while they are every moment expecting to be stricken through with the barbed arrows of divine vengeance and wrath, the Messiah is revealed and promised, and light and deliverance appears with him. And all the prophecies, types, promises, and ceremonies of the Old Testament dispensation, were nothing else but the gradual advances of the Sun of righteousness toward our horizon. But yet all this time the Sun is not actually arisen in our view, though after the break of day, in the first promise, the light did shine more and more brightly till the sun did actually arise. And therefore,

3. There is the visit of the day-spring from on high, in his actual incarnation or manifestation in our nature. This was, I say, the rising of the sun in the open view of the world, which, how glorious it was, we are told by those that saw it, John i. 14: "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." The angels, these morning stars, sing together, and proclaim the tidings of his arrival, as a matter of joy and triumph, Luke ii. 10. We "bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." And thereupon they break forth with an anthem of praise, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men." O how did this Sun of righteousness rejoice to run his race of humiliation in this lower world, having his divine glory obscured with a veil of flesh, lest his dazzling glory should have overwhelmed us! The beams of divine glory were ever and anon breaking through the veil of flesh, in his doctrine, in his miracles, in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension; which I have not now time to insist upon. Only, I would have you to remember, that by this one visit, which he made us in our nature, which continued for the space of about three and thirty years, he fulfilled the law, satisfied justice, finished transgression, made an end of sin, brought in everlasting righteousness, confirmed the covenant,

overthrew principalities and powers, destroyed death, opened up the way to the holy of holies, laid a bridge of communication between heaven and earth, by which God might come to man without prejudice to his justice, and man might come to God without being consumed or overwhelmed.

4. Another visit is the day-spring of a gospel-revelation; when the glad tidings of salvation come first to be published, and "life and immortality brought to light," Matth. iv. 15, 16, to a people or nation. O what a sweet spring of day was it, when, after the resurrection of Christ, the apostles, and other ministers, as the heralds of the great Messiah, began to proclaim pardon, peace and salvation through his blood, first to the Jews, and afterward to the Gentile nations! how did the dark mists of Jewish rites, types, and ceremonies, and of Gentile idolatry and abominations, vanish, before the bright rays of the Sun of righteousness conveyed in the dispensation of the gospel! and what multitudes of converts were added to the church, compared for their innumerable number, to the drops of the dew from the womb of the morning! And what a sweet spring of day was there in our own land, when the gospel came at first to be preached to our forefathers, who were lying under a dark night of Pagan idolatry! And when after that a dark night of Popish blindness and idolatry had overspread us again, what a sweet day-spring from on high did visit us in our reformation! and what a pleasant edge of life and zeal for God and his glory was there to be found upon the spirits of our nobles, gentry, and commons, which discovered itself in their frequent renewing of their solemn covenants, to stand by, and maintain a work of reformation against the emissaries of hell and Rome! and how signally did the Lord countenance that work by the down-pouring of his Spirit, and the remarkable success of the gospel in the conversion of many souls? So then, I say, the preaching of the gospel in a land, or among a people, is a sweet visit of the day-spring from on high.

5. The day of conversion is another visit of the day-spring from on high; when "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." O how sweet and surprising a visit is this! and what a sweet day does then break and spring up in the soul. It is such a visit as brings light, and such a light as turns the shadow of death into a pleasant morning. It is a light that not only shines upon the man, but shines into his heart, irradiating all the powers of his soul, and translating him from darkness to a marvellous light. It is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God." The Spirit now begins to rend "the face of

the covering" that was upon the soul, so that the beams of divine glory, which shined externally in a gospel dispensation, now break in upon the soul, "changing him from glory to glory;" the Spirit now glorifies Christ by taking the things of Christ, and showing them unto the soul. And all this is in the face or person of Christ. The man, who before could "see no form or comeliness in him why he should be desired," now sees him to be "fairer than the children of men, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," and his heart rises at every word or doctrine that has the least tendency to disparage his divine glory. O sirs, has the day-spring from on high thus visited you? If so, then I may safely say, as Christ did to Zaccheus, "This day is salvation come to thy house," to thy heart, to thy soul.

6. There is a day-spring of a renewed manifestation of Christ, after a dark night of desertion. Perhaps the poor believer has been walking in darkness, and could see no light; clouds and darkness were round about him; God was hiding, Satan harassing him with his fiery darts, iniquities prevailing, trouble and distress surrounding him on every hand, and the poor soul brought to that pinch, as to be crying out, "O that it were with me as in months past! I am cast out of his sight; his mercy is clean gone, he hath forgotten to be gracious;" like Zion, "the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." However, at length the day breaks, the Sun of righteousness arises, breaks through all interposing clouds, giving such a challenge of grace as that, Is. xl. 27: "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" and he takes the poor soul all in his arms and bosom, saying to it, as he did to Ephraim, "Thou art my dear son, thou art my pleasant child, I remember thee still, my bowels are troubled for thee; I will surely have mercy upon thee; and with everlasting kindness am I now returned to thee, though for a small moment I had forsaken thee." O what a sweet visit is this, and what a sweet day breaks upon the soul! How is unbelief, jealousy, despondency, and false surmises of God, put out of countenance! And heartily does the soul condemn itself for its rash and hasty conclusions of the Lord's love and faithfulness, saying, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee." O now, now, the day is again broken, and I see that, "his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Such a visit of the day-spring from on high had the spouse, Cant. iii. 1—4, and Cant. ii. 8.

7. I might tell you, that there is a sweet day-spring visit,

that Christ makes to his people at death and the last judgment: John xiv. 3: "I go *away*, *but* I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." This is the day-spring of eternal glory, which shall never suffer an eclipse, and which shall never end in a night of desertion, or affliction, or death. Lift up thy head, believer, for this day of complete redemption is drawing near; the day of complete redemption to thy soul is coming at death, and complete redemption to thy soul and body is coming: for "when Christ who is thy life, shall appear, then shalt thou also appear with him in glory;" thou shalt then sing, and say, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation." Thus, I have told you of some of Christ's visits, which makes the day to spring from on high.

III. The third thing proposed was, to *inquire why Christ's visits are likened to the spring of day.* I answer in the following particulars:

1. The spring of day brings light with it; it dispels the clouds, the fogs, and darkness of the night. So Christ's visits bring light to the poor soul that was in darkness, the light of knowledge, the light of comfort and joy along with them. "The sun of righteousness," scatters beams of light round about him, wherever he goes. And this light is nothing else than the dawnings of glory in the soul, there being only a gradual difference between the light of grace here, and the light of glory hereafter, the first being an infallible pledge and earnest of the last.

2. The spring of day is gradual and growing; the beginnings of it are small, but the latter end of it does greatly increase. The day does not spring up all at once; no, but by little and little it advances till it come to the mid-day. So is it in Christ's visits that he makes to a land, or to a particular person, his light is gradual and growing. When once he begins to shine, he shines "more and more unto the perfect day." The Sun of righteousness, when once he arises on a soul with healing in his wings, he is ever on the ascendant, and will be so till the mid-day of glory come. Yes, for aught I know, there will be new scenes of glory opening to the saints in heaven through an endless eternity; for it is impossible that a finite understanding can take in at once the perfections of an infinite God.

3. The day-spring brings life and joy with it. The birds begin to chirp and sing, and fill the air with their melodious notes; and every thing puts on another face at the approaching sun. So Christ's visits of grace and love fill the soul of the believer with a spiritual melody: "the time of the sing-

ing of birds draws near," when the Sun of righteousness arises. When he arises in a gospel dispensation, proclaiming his salvation to the ends of the earth, then is fulfilled that word, Is. xxiv. 16, "From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous." And when he arises on the soul in conversion, or in a renewed manifestation, the poor soul lays aside its sackcloth: it gets "the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

4. The spring of the day is irresistible; all the power of men and devils, with all their combined force, the grossest darkness, the thickest fogs, cannot hinder the dawning of the morning-light. So Christ's visits of grace, whether in a gospel dispensation at conversion, or in renewed intimations, cannot be hindered. When his set time to favour Zion is come, he will not be let or stopped. The mountains of distance, ignorance, enmity, unbelief, melt away before him; they flow down "at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob." Every thing that stands in his way vanishes, as the darkness of the night vanishes at the approach of the sun. Gates of brass, and bars of iron, are broken; strong holds are ruined; high and towering imaginations, that exalted themselves against him, are all levelled and brought down, when he has a mind to come.

5. The spring of the day is manifestative; it discovers things that lay hid in the darkness of the night. The trees, the flowers, the herbs and other things with which the face of the earth is bespangled and adorned, lie hid in the darkness of the night; but when the day springs up, they appear in their beauty. So here, before Christ visits the soul, the glories of a gospel dispensation lie hid; but whenever Christ, the Sun of righteousness, arises, the soul "sees the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God:" it just comes, as it were, into a new world of wonders. The mysteries of the kingdom, the mystery of a Trinity, the mystery of the incarnation, the mystery of union with Christ, the mystery of justification by his righteousness, of sanctification by his Spirit, the secrets of the covenant, and every truth of religion, appears with a new beauty and lustre: then it is that sin is seen in its exceeding sinfulness, the law in its extent and spirituality, the covenant in its freedom, Christ in his fulness, God in his greatness and excellency. Hence the day of conversion is called the "opening of the eyes of the blind," and the Spirit of Christ a "Spirit of wisdom and revelation."

6. The spring of day is sure to them that have seen daylight. Who doubts of the return of the morning, even when the sun is set, and on the other side of the globe? So Christ's

visits, in the renewed manifestations of his love, are sure to the soul that has once had the day-spring from on high visiting it in conversion. God's covenant of grace, in which he has engaged his faithfulness to return with *everlasting kindness*, is as firm as his covenant with day. And this, by the way, may serve to stop the mouth of unbelief; when under darkness and hiding, it is ready to say, "His mercy is clean gone," and "he hath in anger shut up his tender mercies;" for as sure as the natural day will spring, so sure shall the Sun of righteousness return again to thy soul with healing under his wings.

7. The spring of day may be clear, and yet clouds may cast up after the day is broken. There may be a fair blink in the morning, and the sun may wade through clouds all the day; yea, may perhaps set in a cloud. So here, there may be a bright blink in the day of converting love, and yet, in a little, the sun may be eclipsed, and the poor soul held, all its days in this world, in bondage, through desertion, temptation, affliction, and fears of death; yea, perhaps the sun also may set in a cloud, I mean the soul die under a cloud; but though it be so, yet as the sun sets in safety, though it set in a cloud, so the soul may, and does die in safety, though it may die in darkness.

8. The light of the day-spring is a common thing, the beggar may use it as well as the king. So the light and grace of God in the gospel dispensation is common and free to rich and poor, &c. Thus, you see in what respects Christ's visits are like the spring of day.

IV. The *fourth* thing was, to *inquire what sort of a day it is that Christ's visits bring along with them.*

1. It is a day of power; Psal. cx. 3: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." When he comes to visit the soul with efficacious grace, the bars of death are broken, the gates of brass are opened, the everlasting doors are lifted up, the foundations of Satan's usurped kingdom are shaken, and the soul translated out of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son; hence we read of the revealing of God's arm, Is. liii. 1. It is a day in which Christ comes "travelling in the greatness of his strength," showing himself "mighty to save."

2. Christ's visits make a day of salvation to spring from on high on the soul: hence, when Christ pays a visit to Zaccheus, he tells him, "This day is salvation come to thy house." Salvation follows the Saviour's visits in his train; salvation from the curse of the law, the stroke, of justice, salvation from the power of sin, the guilt of sin, the filth of sin; salvation from "the wrath that is to come." And when this day springs from on high on the soul, the poor creature can-

not but say and sing, "He that is our God, is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever."

3. Christ's visit brings a day of espousals with it: Jer. ii. 2: "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals." Song iii. 11: "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." Whenever Christ approaches, and manifests his glory to the soul, he appears as a bridegroom presenting the marriage-contract of the covenant in his hand, saying as the servant of Abraham to Rebekah, "Wilt thou go with this man?" upon which the soul immediately yields itself, with heart and hand, saying, "I am the Lord's.—Whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge.—Neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, shall separate" me from this better husband, "who is raised from the dead."

4. Christ's visit makes a day of liberty to spring up. The poor creature was under the hardest bondage and captivity, shut up in the prison of sin, shut up under the law's curse, shut up in the very "gall of bitterness:" but, O! whenever Christ comes, he cries to the prisoners to "come forth," to them that sit in darkness, "Show yourselves." He "proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. O sirs, there is no liberty like that which comes with Christ's visit; "whom the Son makes free, they are free indeed:" hence called "the glorious liberty of the sons of God." Freedom from sin, from Satan, from the world, from unbelief, the reign of natural enmity. Christ's visit brings a year of release, a jubilee with it; "the acceptable year of the Lord, the day of the redeemed of the Lord."

5. Christ's visit makes a day of rest to spring up to the soul. It is a Sabbath, a day of rest; for then it is that the soul enters into his rest by believing. The poor creature was wearying itself in the greatness of his way, toiling and working at the oar of the duties of the law, in order to get life and righteousness; it was going under the weight of sin, as a burden too heavy for it to bear, going under the arrows of the Almighty, that were drinking up his spirits: but, O! when the day springs from on high, it cries with David, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." At the first sight of Christ the soul cries out, as the Lord said of Zion, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it," and like it well.

6. Christ's visit from on high brings a day of love along

with it: Ezek. xvi: "Thy time was a time of love," namely, when I visited thee. It is a time of love on Christ's side; for then it is that he gives vent to electing and redeeming love, and says to the soul, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." His love to the poor soul was like a fire pent up in his breast, seeking a vent and longing for a vent; but, O! when the day springs from on high, the love of God runs out like a *river*, from "the throne of God and the Lamb." And then it is a day of love on the believer's side also; the love of God being shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, it makes his heart to burn within him; so that he loves the Lord with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither are all floods able to drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house" to draw it away from Christ, "it would utterly be contemned. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" &c.

7. It is a day of grace; for then it is that "grace reigns through righteousness," in a triumphant manner. The essence of grace lies in the freedom and liberality of love, without regard to merit, or without any manner of constraint. O how does the freedom of grace shine with a peculiar lustre and majesty in the day of Christ's visit to the soul! The soul that before saw God sitting on a throne of justice, expecting every moment a sentence of condemnation from him, now sees him in Christ sitting on a throne of grace, stretching out a sceptre of grace, calling the sinner to come and receive grace and mercy to help it in time of need. O how liberal is a God of grace in Christ, when the day springs from on high! He gives himself, he gives his Son, he gives his spirit, he gives grace, he gives glory, he gives all "the sure mercies of David," and all "without money" or "price."

8. Christ's visit is a day of wonder; for then the man sees him whose name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace." The man enters into a new world, "a new heaven, and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." The man, when he looks back to his former state of darkness, deadness, distance, cannot miss to be surprised at the wonderful alteration of affairs with him; hence, in the day of Christ's visit in the morning of conversion, the man is said to be "translated into a marvellous light." The man wonders at Christ, as though he had never heard of him before; he wonders at the great mystery of godliness, "God manifested in the flesh." He wonders at the love of God in Christ, "O the height, the depth, the breadth, and length of the love of God, which passeth knowledge!" He wonders at the freedom, fulness, stability of a new covenant. He wonders to see Christ, the head of the

covenant, and all the promises of it "yea and amen in him." In a word, he wonders at every thing; and he wonders where his eyes were, that he never saw these things before.

9. It is an everlasting day that springs from on high, when Christ first visits the soul, a day that shall never end. Indeed the light of the day may sometimes be sadly obscured, insomuch that, to the believer's sense, he may be under a dark night, and see no light: but, O! whenever the sun arises, he shall never set again: no, no; "the Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

V. The *fifth* thing was, to *show why this day is said to spring* from on high. To this I answer in these two or three things:—

1. Because Christ himself is the most high God, "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." Indeed, Arians would make him an inferior kind of Deity, as though he were not the self-same independent, self-existent God with the Father. But whatever others think or say, to derogate from his glory, let us "honour him as we honour the Father;" for he is "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, God blessed for ever, the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of all the ends of the earth."

2. This day is said to spring from on high, because of his royal descent and progeny, by eternal generation from his Father; he is "the only begotten of his Father," the same in substance, equal in power and glory with him. O wonder, sirs, that ever a person of his excellence should have stooped so low, as to pay a visit to man upon earth! and yet so it is, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

3. He is said to spring from on high, because he is the leading blessing that comes down from above, from the Father of lights. He is the unspeakable gift of God, and the gift that brings all gifts and graces in his train and retinue: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!" He it is that brings down the new Jerusalem to the earth with him: the greatest glory of heaven came, and visited this lower world, when he came.

VI. The *sixth* thing is, the *application*. And the *first* use shall be of *information*, in the particulars following. Is it so, that the day-spring from on high hath visited us? then,

1. See hence the amazing love of God to the lost family of Adam. When angels sinned, they were "reserved in chains under darkness," and a night of eternal darkness continues upon them: but when he passed them by, he made "the day-spring from on high to visit us:" on which account we may well take up that song, Psal. cxviii. 27: "God is the Lord,

which hath showed us light." O sirs, wonder and admire at this love, that passeth all knowledge! John iii. 16: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. and, 1 John iv. 10: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

2. See hence what great kindness and love lodges in the heart of our Immanuel to perishing sinners. A visit is taken as a token of love and kindness, especially the visit of one that is far above us. If a nobleman, a king, a potentate, should come and visit a beggar in his cottage, every body would immediately conclude that he had a great kindness for that beggar. Well, sirs, this is the case here; the eternal Son of God had such a kindness for Adam's family, that he would needs pay us a visit. And O what a kindly visit was it! He was not content barely to come and see how we did, and then leave us as he found us, which is our custom when we visit one another; no, but he would needs be related to us, "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh;" and because we were drowned in debt, he would needs become surety for us; and because no less than blood would pay our debt, therefore he "poured out his soul unto death" for us, till justice said, It is enough, and gave him a free discharge of our debt, in his resurrection from the dead, by which we are "begotten again unto a lively hope" of an everlasting "inheritance," that is "incorruptible and undefiled." And not only has he done all this, but he comes again and visits lost sinners in a gospel dispensation, courting their kindness, beseeching them to be reconciled to God through him, offering to betroth them to himself for ever. O! is not this "good-will towards men on earth," that may make every one of us to cry out, "Glory to God in the highest," that "the day-spring from on high hath visited us?"

3. See hence what happy persons believers are: why, they are "children of light, and of the day;" for the day-spring from on high hath visited them. As there was light in Goshen, when all the rest of the land of Egypt was overspread with darkness; so there is light in the dwellings of the righteous, when all the rest of the world is overspread with a worse than Egyptian darkness. And therefore, what Moses said of Israel, when comparing them with the rest of the nations, that may we say of believers, the true Israel of God, "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!"

4. See hence the misery of all Christless, unbelieving sin-

ners: why, they are still in darkness, the day-spring from on high never visited them. It is observable, the words of the apostle, speaking of sinners that are strangers to Christ; they are "darkness," Eph. v. 8: "Once were ye darkness;" not only are they dark, but they are darkness itself. O, for the Lord's sake, come to "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Come and see the light of the Sun of righteousness: come, see and live. But more of this afterward.

5. See hence whence it is that Christ is so precious, and his visits so valuable to a believer. He himself is so precious to them, that they esteem all things but dung and loss, in comparison of him; he is far more excellent than all the mountains of prey: and his visits are so valuable in their eyes, that when he is absent they go "mourning without the sun;" all the world cannot comfort them, till they see him, and find him: O empty ministers, empty ordinances, empty word and sacraments, empty prayer and praise, till Christ himself come. Why, the reason of it is this; the day never springs till he is come; and when he comes, he turns the shadow of death into the morning; and the poor soul, when the day-spring from on high visits it, "looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, and clear as the sun."

6. See hence, whence it is that the saints are lightened by looking unto Jesus, Psal. xxxiv. 5: "They looked unto him, and were lightened:" why, they cannot miss to be lightened, when they see the day-spring from on high arising on their souls; then is that word fulfilled, Psal. xxx. 5: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

7. See hence, how it comes that the gospel is so glorious; it is a dispensation of glory, and called "the glorious gospel of the blessed God:" why, what makes it so full of glory? why, the reason is, the gospel is the very vehicle of this day-spring from on high, by which "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ," is conveyed to us. "Life and immortality is brought to light by the gospel." O value and prize it, and improve it.

The *second* use, at present, shall be in a word of *exhortation*, in three branches.

The *first* branch of exhortation: Is it so, that the day-spring from on high has visited us? O then, sirs, be exhorted to come and see the beams of the day-spring, and see the glorious things that he discovers by his light. O come and see the day-spring from on high, and the beams of divine glory, that have broken up in the manifestation of the Son of God in our nature, and in the visit that he makes to us in a gospel dispensation. O sirs, God the Father invites you, and calls

you, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." He himself invites you to behold him, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Come and see the glory of his Father in him; for he is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" and "he that hath seen him, hath seen the Father," he being the same supreme God, the same independent, self-existent, necessary Being, with the Father. O! woes us, that such horrid blasphemy should be uttered against the Son of God in the church of Scotland, as if he were an inferior kind of deity, whereby we should have more gods than one. And woes me, that blasphemy against the Son of God should not meet with a deeper resentment in this church, than a bare suspension of the blasphemer, and that he should have so many to befriend him. But whatever others may say of him, let us speak honourably of him, and own him to be 'the same in substance, equal in power and glory,' with his eternal Father. Time will not now allow me to enter upon this subject, and let you see how the name of God, the perfections of God, the works of God, and the worship of God, is ascribed to him in scripture. All I shall do at this time, is, only to take notice of a few beams of divine glory, that are evidently to be seen in this day-spring from on high.

1. Come and see a beam of adorable sovereignty in him; for he is the most high God, and there is no God greater than he, no God above him. Gen. xxii. 16, 17: there the Angel speaks to Abraham out of heaven, and that angel was Christ, as the apostle tells us, Heb. vi. He makes an oath to Abraham, saying, "In blessing I will bless thee. By myself," says he, "have I sworn." And if you ask the apostle, why he did swear by himself? he will tell you, Heb. vi. 13, that "when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself."

2. Come and see a beam of eternity in this day-spring; for he is *the everlasting Father*, or the Father of eternity, Is. ix. 6: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last." "Before Abraham was, I am." He was in the beginning, John i. 1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

3. Come and see a beam of unchangeableness in this morning star, Heb. i. 10—12, compared with Psal. cii. 25. Who reads that word, Psal. cii. "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands," but immediately would understand it of the one only living, true, and unchangeble God? It is impossible to understand

it of any other than of God himself. We see it expressly applied to Christ, Heb. i. 10—12.

4. Come and see a beam of adorable wisdom in this day-spring, namely, in an incarnate God, 1 Cor. i. 24. Christ is there called "the wisdom of God, yea the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom of God; all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in him." Never did the wisdom of God display itself after such a manner, as it has done in Christ, in bringing these two natures of God and man, which were at an infinite distance, into a personal union one with another. O sirs, a sight of this great wonder would make you and me to join issue with the apostle, and say, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

5. Come and see a ray of glorious and amazing power springing up in the day-spring of his incarnation. Hence Christ is called not only "the wisdom of God," but "the power of God." The power of God is manifested in the creation of the world, by a word speaking; it is manifested in the government of the world, and turning the great wheels of providence with an unerring steadiness: but never did God make such a discovery of his power as he did in Christ, when he brought infinite and finite, God and man, to centre in the person of our Immanuel. O sirs, lift up the eye of faith, and see Omnipotency exerting itself in "the man of God's right hand," whom he hath "made strong for himself." See him treading down the strength of hell, turning the battle to the gate, spoiling principalities and powers, destroying death by death, laying the foundation of a happy eternity, in the death and blood of his eternal Son.

6. Come and see a ray of divine holiness springing out from an incarnate Deity. Isaiah, when he saw his glory, saw the angels covering their faces with their wings, that they might not be blinded and dazzled with the beauty of divine holiness, crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." Holiness shone in his perfect obedience to the holy law, by which he not only fulfilled it, but "magnified it," and "made it honourable." Holiness shone in his death, in which he gave such a discovery of his hatred of sin, that he would "finish" it, and "make an end of" it, even at the expense of his blood.

7. Come and see a ray of awful and tremendous justice shining forth in the day-spring of his incarnation. Was there ever such an act of justice put forth, as that of bruising his own Son? Sin was found in him by imputation: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him:" he cried, "Awake, O sword, against

the man that is my fellow; smite the shepherd." O sirs, come and see justice satisfied, and judgment executed on the Son of God as our surety, and this laid as the foundation of a throne of grace, that so "he might be just, when he is the justifier of them that believe in Jesus."

8. Come and see a bright ray of divine mercy and love breaking forth in the day-spring of his incarnation; the sounding of his bowels, the beating of his blessed heart. O sirs, what is Christ, but just the love of God wrapped up in flesh and blood! 1 John iv. 9, 10. Here is the highest flight that ever the love of God took: and higher it cannot mount. It is observed by some divines, that the other attributes of God are able to do more than they have done: infinite power can make more worlds, infinite wisdom devise greater things than ever yet appeared to man; but as for the love of God, it has stretched itself to the uttermost; it can go no farther: what could he do more for us than to give his Son, the Son of his love, to give him unto the death? "and how will he not with him freely give us all things?" "O the height, the depth, the breadth, and the length of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge!"

9. Come and see a glorious ray of divine faithfulness in this day-spring of a God manifested in the flesh. God made a promise to our first parents in paradise, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent;" that is, that God should be incarnate, and, in our nature, overturn the devil's kingdom and government. This was the hardest promise that ever God made, and the most difficult to accomplish.—Well, but he has done it: what was said in a way of prophecy under the Old Testament, is now to us a piece of glorious history, as a thing already done. O it is done, it is done; "God is manifested in the flesh:" and so that first promise is fulfilled; and it is "a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation." Now, I say, seeing this promise is fulfilled, all the rest are easy; and we may have no manner of doubt about them, especially considering that they are all "yea and amen in him;" they are all sworn to him as the great covenant head: "Once have I sworn, I will not lie unto David. Thus I have told you of some rays of divine grace that are to be seen in this day-spring from on high.

I shall next tell you of some sweet sights that are to be seen in the light that this day-spring from on high brings along with him. You know, that the spring of the natural day discovers things that lay hid under the darkness of the night; so this day-spring from on high has brought glorious things to light, which I invite you all to come and see. I name only these few:—

1. Come and see the council of peace opened, and what was transacted among the persons of the glorious Trinity. We are all naturally fond of secrets, to know what is in the hearts of others; and to know what God was doing, and what were his thoughts before the world was made. Well, sirs, the day-spring from on high brings this to light; Christ has opened the book, and loosed the seven seals of it, which none else in heaven or earth were able to do. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were from eternity contriving a way in which sinners might be saved, in a consistency with justice and the law. Come and see the Father undertaking to send and uphold his Son in the great service of redemption; the Son undertaking to do his Father's will, by fulfilling the law, and satisfying justice by his death; and the Holy Ghost undertaking the application of the whole to an elect world, in the fulness of time.

2. Come and see the temple of God opened, for the day-spring from on high discovers this also; for the temple of God is opened now under the New Testament, a far more beautiful temple than ever Solomon's was, though it was the wonder of this lower world. But O here is a temple that is the wonder of heaven and earth, it draws all the spectators in the higher and lower house to behold it; and, sirs, what shall I tell you? "God is in his holy temple, honour and majesty are before his face, strength and beauty are in his holy place." God dwelt in the temple of Solomon typically; but here in the temple of the human nature he dwells really, yea, the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily here; and every one that sees him in this temple, sees "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person."

3. The day-spring from on high is broken; and therefore come and see "the way opened to the holiest by the blood of Jesus," even a new and living way consecrated for us. O sirs, the door of access to God was immediately condemned and shut up upon the entry of sin: but by the day-spring from on high we may see it opened again, and our way to the Father patent, and every step of the way sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, and God crying to you to come forward to him "with boldness," yea, "to draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith."

4. Come and see the Red sea divided, Jordan dried up, that the Israel of God may have a safe and easy passage to the promised land of glory. O sirs, there was a Red sea of wrath, a deep Jordan of death, and of the law's curse, between us and glory, but Christ has "drunk of the brook in the way," yea, he has drunk it dry by his obedience unto the death.

5. Come and see "the pure river of water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." The spring of day has discovered this also, a river of pardoning, justifying, sanctifying, comforting, establishing, strengthening, and sin-killing grace, proceeding out of a throne of grace, and a voice coming out of the throne, saying, "Whosoever will, let him come, and drink of the water of life freely.—Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price."

6. Come and see the tree of life that grows in the upper Paradise, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. O sirs, here is a sight worthy to be seen? Indeed, Christ himself, that blessed branch that springs from on high, as the text may be rendered; the boughs of the tree are so loaded with fruit, that they bow down from heaven to earth, that we may sit down under its shadow, and taste of the sweetness of these fruits.

7. Come and see the royal law of God, which was violated and broken in the first Adam, again magnified and made honourable by Christ the second Adam, and its Lord well pleased for his righteousness' sake; come and see this righteousness of the law fulfilled in us who believe, Christ being "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." O sirs, is not this a wonder to see God fulfilling his own law as a surety for the broken sinner, and imputing his righteousness to us for justification? yet this the day-spring brings to light.

8. Come and see the round sum that our Cautioner paid to justice; not indeed a sum of silver and gold, but the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, as of a lamb without spot; blood which is the blood of God, blood of more value than heaven and earth, blood sufficient to ransom ten thousand worlds, as to its internal value; blood crying "for better things than the blood of Abel."

9. Come and see the new covenant confirmed and established: the day-spring discovers this also. Adam's covenant was broken, and we are all lying under the curse of it by nature; but, lo, here a far better covenant, even a covenant of grace, of which Christ is the surety, having sealed it with his blood, and appended new visible seals to it under the New Testament, baptism and the Lord's supper, the last of which we are this day about to celebrate. Come and see the fulness, freedom, comely order, stability, and perpetuity of this covenant, and how it stands fast in Christ.

10. Come and see the head of the old serpent bruised, by his bruising the heel of the woman's seed: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works

of the devil." "He spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them in his cross." So that, believer, thou mayest take courage, for thou hast only a routed, broken, and shattered enemy to grapple with.

11. Come and see death, that last enemy, destroyed by the death of a Redeemer; for "he has destroyed death," as well as "him that had the power of it." The day-spring from on high lets us see light even in the valley of the shadow of death, so as we need not fear any evil from it; but on the contrary, that we may rejoice over it as a slain and disarmed enemy, saying, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Yea, the day-spring from on high lets us see through the grave, and the sweet morning of the resurrection on the other side of it; so that we may sing and say with Job, *Our* "Redeemer lives; and *therefore*, though worms destroy *our* bodies, yet in *our* flesh shall *we* see God."

12. Come and see a complete discharge of the debt that we owed to justice, in the resurrection of our glorious Surety. This, also, may be read by the light of this day-spring from on high. As Christ died for our offences, or for the punishment of our debt, so he rose again for our justification, or to declare that he had brought in everlasting righteousness, on the account of which we are discharged of the debt, and accepted as righteous in the sight of God. O sirs, Christ rose from the dead in the capacity of a Surety and Representative; and, therefore, we are said to rise in him, and with him, Col. iii. 1; Eph. ii. 6. Our surety, did not steal out of prison, or break it; no, but "he was taken from prison and from judgment:" the prison-door was opened by an express order from the court of heaven; and, therefore, upon the third day, early in the morning, a messenger was despatched from the throne of justice to roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre. O sirs, the lively view of this mystery of love and grace, in the resurrection of Christ, would make us all to take up that sweet doxology, 1 Pet. i. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (the Father of mercies,) which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

13. Come and see an angry and inexorable Deity looking out to us as a *God of peace* in the light of this day-spring from on high. And how can he be but a God of peace, seeing he has brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ? If he were not a God of peace, would he ever have testified his acceptance of the satisfaction at the hand of our Surety at such a rate? No, surely. And, therefore, when we look up to a risen Christ, sitting in our nature at the right

hand of God, we may warrantably conclude, that "though *he* was angry, *yet his* anger is turned away. Behold, God is *our* salvation: *we* will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is *our* strength and *our* song, he also is become *our* salvation," Is. xiii. 1, 2.

14. As an evidence that he is a God of peace, a reconciled God in Christ, come and see him making for all people in the mount of the gospel, "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." O sirs, the day-spring from on high discovers a well-covered table of the blessings of heaven, of all "the sure mercies of David," presented and ready for our entertainment, with a frank invitation and call to every one, to "come and eat of this bread, and drink of the wine that he has mingled." And, O sirs, we tell you in the name of God, that you have as good a right to take and eat, to receive and apply Christ, and his whole fulness as held out in the dispensation of the gospel, as ever you had to a meal of meat when it was set before you. And, therefore, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

15. Come and see that life which was lost, forfeited by the fall of the first Adam, recovered and lying ready for us in the hand of the second Adam. Christ, as the second Adam, stept into the room of the first Adam, and fulfilled every point and article of the covenant of works, which required perfect obedience as the condition of life. And, therefore, life now belongs to him; and accordingly this life is in the Son: God has given to him eternal life, John xvii. 2; 1 John v. 11. He is the new heir of eternal life, and of all the promises that belong to it. O sirs, is not this good news, that our Goel, our kind kinsman, has bought back the mortgaged and forfeited inheritance?

16. Come and see our kinsman and elder Brother assigning and making over himself and his right to eternal life to us in a new testament, or new and better covenant. "God hath given eternal life unto us" in his word of grace and promise, 1 John v. 11. This testament, this promise, this grant, this offer of life, is made to every man and woman that hears the gospel, or reads the Bible, with an express command to *search the testament*, that therein he may find *eternal life:* and we had need to fear "lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should come short of it." O sirs, be not like fools, having a price put in their hands, yet have no wisdom to improve it.

17. Come and see to read, and subscribe all these as the record of a glorious Trinity; for the day-spring from on high discovers this also. The "three that bear record in heaven,

the Father, the Word, and the Spirit," attest all this in the capacity of habile witnesses; they have deponed upon the truth of every thing I have been saying; particularly on the truth of this, "that God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son." And, therefore, come and see to set to your seal, *that God is true;* for if you do not, you make God a *liar* by unbelief; for which crime you are *condemned already.*

Object. 1. These are indeed sweet discoveries that are made by the day-spring from on high; but O, say you, how shall we come by a sight of them? *Answ.* You must open your eyes, that the light of day may enter in to you. Let the day-light shine ever so brightly, or whatsoever beautiful desirable objects may be round about a man, yet he cannot see while his eyes are shut; and, therefore, you must needs open your eyes, if you would see the day-spring from on high, and the discoveries that it makes.

Object. 2. You bid me open my eyes, but, alas! I want a visual faculty, and you may as well bid a man that is stone-blind to open his eyes, as speak after that manner to me; for I was born blind, and therefore cannot see. *Answ.* 1. We would think you brought a good length, if you were but really sensible of your spiritual or soul blindness; for the most part that we have to deal with, are just like the Pharisees, who said to Christ, *Are we blind also?* They think they see well enough, while indeed they are stark blind like moles in the things of God. (2.) Remember that it is not we, but God himself, that bids you who are blind look up and see this day-spring from on high: Is. xlii. 1: "Behold my servant whom I uphold. Look unto me, and be ye saved." And, therefore, in obedience to him who commands, attempt, and strive, and essay to open your eyes, and see these glorious things, which the day-spring from on high discovers; for it is in this way that he recovers sight to the blind. He that bids you look and see, also counsels you to buy of him eye-salve, that you may see. (3.) Follow the example of blind Bartimeus. Christ is coming this way to-day, for his way is in his sanctuary; and while you hear the sound of his retinue or attendants on this occasion, lift up your voice to him, and say, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me, and let me receive my sight:" only ask in faith, nothing doubting of his ability and willingness to do it; for it is his promise to "open blind eyes, to make the lame to leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing." This much then for my *first* exhortation, to come and see the day-spring from on high, see his glorious rays, and the glorious discoveries that he has made to a lost world. I proceed now to a

Second exhortation. Is it so that the day-spring from on high hath visited us? Has he visited us by an actual assuming of our nature, which he is now wearing in heaven? and does he visit us with the offers of his grace and love in a gospel-dispensation? O then be exhorted and entreated to receive and entertain his visit. Bid him welcome; and say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord to save us." What is faith? we are always calling you to believe; and if you ask what it is, here is a plain and easy answer: It is just to receive and welcome the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, coming to visit you in the gospel call and offer. You all know what it is to receive a visit from a friend; when you receive him you bid him welcome, you open your door to him, you give him his errand, and entreat him to stay with you. So to believe, is to entertain the visit of him that brings the day-spring from on high along with him; it is to make open doors to him, to lift up the everlasting gates of your souls, and bid him hearty welcome, and to give him his errand, by trusting him in his saving, justifying, sanctifying, and reconciling work.

O sirs, need I use any motives or arguments to persuade you to entertain the visit of the day-spring from on high? You welcome the day-visit of the natural sun in the firmament; and will you not welcome and receive the visits of the Sun of righteousness, who comes with healing under his wings to you? However, because sad experience tells us that they are but few who do really entertain his visit that he makes in a gospel dispensation; yea, it is the hardest matter in the world to persuade sinners to give him a hearty welcome; I shall offer a few gospel considerations to your rational faculties to persuade you. And while we are speaking, O be calling up to heaven, that God himself, by a sweet and irresistible power, may persuade and enable you to make his visits welcome.

Consider then, 1. Who he is, and whence he comes. O! well may we cry out, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" Men and angels cannot declare his generation. Such is his excellency, that we cannot frame to pronounce his name, or call him "Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." His name is the "King of kings, and Lord of lords, the Prince of the kings of the earth." O who would refuse to welcome his visits, who "humbles himself" when he "beholds things that are in heaven!" And then will you consider from whence he comes; he comes from a far country, the land afar off; he has left his royal palace, and all the pleasures that he had with his Father before the world was, to visit you, and yet will you not make him wel-

come? If a great king should undertake a journey from the uttermost wings of the earth to make a visit to any of you, would you bid him depart from you? would you cast your door in his face when he were come? Well, sirs, this is the case; and therefore, O receive and entertain his visit that he makes to you in the dispensation of the glorious gospel.

2. Consider what is his errand, when he comes to visit us from on high. Indeed, you and I might have expected a visit of wrath and vengeance, that he should come to resent his own and his Father's quarrel, for the contempt of his authority, and the violation of his holy law. But, O sirs, what shall I tell you, "Christ came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved; the Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost:" he came to deliver you out of the hands of your enemies, that you may "serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of your life." His errand in his visit that he is making this day, is to hide you from the stormy wind and tempest of God's wrath, that is ready to break upon you, and overwhelm you for ever. His errand is to wash you, because you are polluted, plunged in a ditch, so that your own clothes abhor you; and he is saying to the filthy sinner, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." His errand is to heal you, because you are over-run with wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores: thou art like the poor man that was lying wounded half dead between Jerusalem and Jericho; he is the tender-hearted Samaritan come to bind up and heal thy wounds. He sees thee stark naked, without a rag to cover thee; and, therefore, his errand is to "clothe" thee "with the garments of salvation," and to "cover" thee "with the robe of righteousness." His errand is to open thy prison-doors, to knock off thy fetters, and to confer a glorious liberty upon you. O sirs, who is it in his right wits that would refuse to entertain a visit from one that comes upon such an errand?

3. Consider what rough ways, what thorny paths, what hardships and difficulties he has gone through, in paying a visit to you in the gospel dispensation. He had the wrath of his Father, the rage of men and devils, to encounter in his way. He was torn in pieces; his soul and body rent asunder in his way to you. He was hunted like the hind of the morning, and chased up and down by the hounds of hell, till they slew him on mount Calvary; and all for your sake, and out of kindness to you. In a word, mountains were in his way; but he came "leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills." Seas of blood and wrath were in his

way; but he wades them all to pay you a visit. And yet when he is come through all these, and innumerable more hardships out of kindness to you, O will you not make him welcome when he is come?

4. Will you consider how near he is come to you in this day-spring of gospel-light. He is come so near in his visit, that he is even at thy door: "Behold I stand at thy door and knock." His visit is so near, that thou needest not "ascend into heaven, nor descend into the deep," in quest of him: "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach." And when he himself comes near, he brings his righteousness and salvation along with him," Is. xlvi. 13. Now, why is he come so near to visit thee with his righteousness and salvation, but that thou mayst give him a kindly welcome? O say, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

5. You are concluded under a royal law, enacted by the authority of Heaven, to entertain the visit of this day-spring from on high; and a law which is fenced with the severest penalty, if it be disobeyed. The law is recorded, 1 John iii. 23: "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ:" and this God looks upon as the *Alpha* and *Omega* of our work and business in the world, John vi. 29: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." And unless you welcome the visit that his Son makes you, no other work or service you do him can be accepted; for "without faith it is impossible to please him." And, therefore, sirs, consider, it is not left optional to you to entertain his visit or not; no, if you do not, you are guilty of rebellion against God, and of disobedience to the great command that was issued out from the throne of glory above; and "disobedience is as the sin of witchcraft," which is to be punished with burning.

6. Consider how well he takes it, when his visit is received, when he is entertained in a way of believing: O it is "the day of the gladness of his heart;" he comes in, and sups with us, and we with him. Christ rejoiced in Spirit, when an account was brought to him, that his gospel was received through the cities of Israel. He takes it so kindly when his visits are entertained, that he comes in, and fixes his rest and abode in the soul, never to depart: he says, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it."

7. Consider that this visit of the day-spring from on high will not always last; I mean his visits, in a gospel dispensation will come to an end. We read sometimes in scripture of a day of grace, a day of salvation, a day which is the sinner's

day: "If thou hadst known in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" says the Lord to Jerusalem. Jerusalem's day was the day in which Christ visited them in his own person, and by the ministry of his apostles, opening up the great mystery of salvation: that day of theirs is now set, and a long dark night is come upon them; "the things that belong to their peace are hid from their eyes." So, sirs, this is the day in which Christ, the Sun of righteousness, is visiting you; but you know not how soon he may withdraw, and "leave our house desolate;" he may lift his tent, and remove to another place of the world. But however the day of gospel light may be continued in the land, yet death will put an end to it, as to every individual person in a very little. And therefore, O, for the Lord's sake, entertain him, while his visiting-day continues. This is the "acceptable time, this is the day of salvation." "If ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," lest he "swear, that ye shall never enter into his rest."

8. To engage you to entertain and welcome the visit of the day-spring from on high, consider that he is loath at his very heart to go away with a slight: he *hates* parting and *putting away;* he does not think of departing without getting a welcome: Hos. xi. 8: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

9. His heart is saddened to the last degree, when his visits are not entertained; he wept over Jerusalem, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." O sirs, how can you find in your heart to sadden his heart, that brings the day-spring from on high with him? Christ had many a sad heart, when he was here upon earth; he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs:" but will you make his heart sad now, when he is in heaven? There is nothing has such a tendency to sadden his heart in heaven, as to see sinners rejecting the visits and offers of his grace and love, that he makes to them by the gospel.

10. If you do not entertain the visits of his grace now, he will visit you in another manner; he will pay you a sad visit. Perhaps he may visit you in a way of awful wrath and judgment, even on this side of time: "Shall I not visit for these things? and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Sometimes sad temporal judgments follow upon the rejection of Christ, even in this life. But though you may perhaps escape temporal strokes, yet there is a sad visit abiding you at death and the last judgment; when Christ ap-

pears in his glory, rearing up his tribunal in the clouds, then you who would not entertain his visits of grace, shall begin to weep and wail: Rev. i. 7: "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." O sirs, let these things prevail with you to entertain the visit the day-spring from on high is making to you in the gospel dispensation.

Object. 1. You bid me entertain his gospel visit; but, alas! I am ever thinking, that his visit is to others, and not to me. I answer, That is just the art and subterfuge of unbelief; under a pretended modesty it will not receive Christ's visits, as if his visits were for others, and not for thy soul in particular. But, sirs, allow me to tell you, that though unbelief may carry a blush of pretended humility in its countenance, yet it is nothing but devilish pride at the root or bottom. But whatever may be the surmise of unbelief, yet I can assure you, in the name of God, that his visit in the gospel dispensation is to thee, man, to thee, woman, as particularly as if thou wert named by name and surname; he stands at every individual man's door, and knocks, saying, "Open to me, and I will come in;" and to you is the voice of Wisdom directed, even to the "sons of men." And therefore, take it home and apply it to yourself in particular, with as great assurance as though you heard a voice out of heaven, calling you by name and surname.

Object. 2. I would fain receive his visit, but I think I see great mountains between him and me, he is behind the mountains, and I am far off from him, and he is far away from me. *Answ.* Jesus Christ is not so far off, as every unbelieving heart would suggest; for, "behold he standeth behind our wall, waiting to see if we will rue upon him, and receive his visit. Thou sayest thou art afar off, but his voice is even to such, Is. lvii. 19: "I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near. The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off," says Peter to his hearers, Acts ii. 39; and the same say I unto you. You say there are mountains between him and you; but "behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills." If thou wilt but give him entertainment, he will make all mountains as a plain at his presence: "Jordon is driven back; the mountains skip away like rams, and the little hills like lambs."

Object. 3. My sins are so great, that he will never visit me. *Answ.* See him visiting the greatest of sinners with the offers of his love and grace, Is. i. 18: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet,

they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Object. 4. I am a condemned sinner, under sentence of death from the holy law; therefore his visits cannot be to me. *Answ.* He comes to visit you and me, because we are condemned to die. His visit that he made in his incarnation, was "to them that were under the law, to redeem them, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And if you will receive his visit in the gospel, the sentence of condemnation shall that moment be taken off you; for "he that believeth on the Son of God, is not condemned; yea, there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Object. 5. I am vile, filthy, and polluted; therefore his visit is not to me. *Answ.* "Though thou hast lien among the pots, he will make thee as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." He is saying to thee this day, "Wilt thou be made clean? I will sprinkle clean water upon thee, and thou shalt be clean: from all thy filthiness, and from all thine idols will I cleanse thee."

Object. 6. I have refused his visits in the gospel so often, that I am afraid he is gone, he is departed, and will never come again. *Answ.* Jer. iii. 1: "Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord." He calls backsliders to return, and he will *heal their backslidings.*

Object. 7. I do not know if I be among the elect that were given to Christ; and, if so, his visit is not to me. *Answ.* His visits and offers of grace in the gospel are to sinners, to "men, and to the sons of men;" and if thou find thy name there, thou hast no reason to exclude thyself. You begin at the wrong end of things, when you meddle with the decrees of God, which are secret things, and belong to the Lord. Look, first, to the things that are revealed in the word and that is the way to arrive at the knowledge of the secret designs of his heart; and, for your encouragement to take this way, I never yet heard it miscarry. They who take God at his word, and hold him at his word, find themselves among the number of the elect; whereas they that will needs begin first to search God's secret decree, and die in this way of doing, find themselves among the number of reprobates in the end. And therefore meddle you first with things that are revealed, "search the scriptures," consult the oracles of the word, read your name there, and see whether or not Christ be speaking to you, and visiting you there: and thus you shall know that love lies in his heart to you.

Object. 8. You bid me receive Christ's visits; but, alas! how can I do it? I have no entertainment for him. *Answ.*

He brings entertainment with him. When his visit is received, he comes and he sups with us, and causes us to sup with him. If you think that you have any entertainment but what he brings with him, I have little hope of you indeed.

Object. 9. I am a poor hard-hearted sinner, my heart is like a piece of the nether millstone. *Answ.* Entertain his visit; for "he takes away the stony heart, and gives the heart of flesh."

Object. 10. I am so impotent, that I cannot open to him when he comes; how can I receive his visit, when the key of the heart hangs only at his own girdle? *Answ.* He comes to visit thee because thou art impotent, to give thee strength; and he has said, that he will "give power to the faint, and increase strength to them that have no might:" only put the work in his hand, and he will "work all thy works in thee and for thee."

A *third* branch of exhortation from the doctrine is this; I exhort you, and call you not only to receive the visit that he is making to you in the gospel dispensation, but look up to him for a visit of his special grace and love, on this occasion to your own souls. O pray that the day-spring may break up among us. Believe, expect, hope, and trust for a visit of the glorious "Sun of righteousness, the bright and morning Star, *that* in his temple every one *may* speak of his glory." I say it again, that I would have you to hope, believe, trust, and wait for a visit of the influences of his Spirit, of the discoveries of his glory, of the light of his countenance to your own souls, on this occasion. I am persuaded, that it would fare better with us, if we were more taken up in trusting, and hoping, and expecting of good at the Lord's hand. Many persons go to pray, go to hear the word, go to a sacrament; but they do it as if no good were to be got at the Lord's hand, as if the master of the feast kept a narrow house, and grudged to give of his goodness to his guests. They think, that his liberal offers, and calls, and invitations are only from the teeth forward. But, O sirs, this is a reflection on our glorious Lord and Master, and I would have you entertain better thoughts of him, and to come with expectation and hope of a visit of the day-spring from on high.

Here I shall show, 1. What advantages a visit of the day-spring brings along with it. 2. What grounds your faith and hope have to go upon, in expecting it, and looking for it.

The *first* thing is, to tell you of some advantages a visit of the day-spring from on high brings along with him.

1. His visits by his Spirit's influences and communications of his grace and love, whether in conversion, or in renewed manifestations, bring life with them to the dead sinner or the

languishing saint and believer. And O how can it be otherwise! for he is the Lord and Prince of life; he is "the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth, and the life." Whenever he comes near to the dead sinner, the Spirit of life enters into him, though he were as dead as the dry bones that were scattered about the grave's mouth. And whenever he comes near to the languishing believer, he revives as the corn, when a warm shower of the rain of heaven falls upon it. The fields laugh, the bread of corn, that was withered, pricks up its head, and looks pleasant, with a shower of rain, and a warm blink of the sun. Just the same effect has a visit of the day-spring from on high on the soul: "I will be as the dew unto Israel:" and what then? "He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon," Hos. xiv. 5, 7.

2. A visit of this day-spring from on high brings riches and wealth along with it; and no wonder, for he is "the heir of all things. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" unsearchable riches are with him. And when he visits the soul with his salvation, he does as the wise men of the east did to him, when they came and saw him in his swaddling clothes, they made a present of gold to him; and he makes a present of gold when he visits the soul, far better than the gold of Ophir; yea, he says to the soul, as he said to his Father in his prayer, John xvii. "All mine are thine;" all that I have is thine; I am thine, and all that follow me; all the treasures of my grace and glory, I assign them, and make them over to thee. O! is not such a visit valuable?

3. Christ's visit brings honour along with it: "Riches and honour are with me. Ever since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable." When this day-spring visits the soul, he sets the soul on high; "he raiseth up the poor *soul* out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill: that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people," Psal. cxiii. 7, 8. It is nothing else but a visit of this day-spring, that makes the believer "more excellent than his neighbour."

4. His visits bring alacrity, joy, and cheerfulness along with them. When this day-star arises in the heart of a sinner, that has been wading through the blackness and darkness of a law-tempest, O what a strange alteration does he make in the soul! The poor thing that was expecting every moment to drop into hell, begins to "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." David, Psal. cxvi. 3, is crying out through the ter-

rors of the law and of conscience, and the melancholy apprehensions of vindictive wrath, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow:" however, the day-spring from on high arises on his soul, in the following part of the psalm, and thereupon he alters his note, and chants and sings to the praises of the Lord, saying, "I was brought low, and he helped me. What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord."

5. A visit of the day-spring brings strength with it to the weak and weary soul. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. O! whenever he comes, he makes the feeble as David, and as the angel of God before him. The man who had no might becomes strong for work, saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" strong for war, the arms of his hands are "made strong through the mighty God of Jacob;" strong for enduring trials and afflictions, saying, "Though he should slay me, yet will I trust in him.—Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?" In a word, the man that was sinking through despondency, by the prevailing of unbelief, becomes "strong in faith, giving glory to God."

6. A visit of the day-spring from on high makes the timorous and faint-hearted soul courageous, and bold as a lion. The poor thing that durst not look God in the face, through a sense of guilt, but was like the timorous dove, hiding himself in the clefts of the rock, when a visit comes, it lifts up its face with a holy and humble boldness: "Having, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." It comes with boldness to a throne of grace, for "grace and mercy to help in time of need." And then the man gets boldness toward all his accusers, so that he dare look the law and conscience, the devil and the world, in the face, saying, "Who can lay any thing to *my* charge? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for *me*." He gets such boldness by the visit of the day-spring from on high, that he can now "go to the altar of God, to God *his* exceeding joy." He is not afraid to go to a communion-table, lest he eat and drink damnation to his soul; no, he sees it to be a cup of salvation: and therefore eats and drinks with a merry heart, knowing his right to the children's bread. He gets such boldness and courage when the visit comes, when the day-spring arises, that he dare look death, the king of terrors, in the face, with a holy courage and bravery, saying, with David, Psal.

xxiii. 4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Thus you see some of the great advantages that accompany and attend a visit of the day-spring from on high.

I shall next give you some advices in order to obtain a visit of this day-spring.

1. Trust and believe it: "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" John xi. 40: "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance."

2. Hope for it; for "he takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in those that hope in his mercy.—The expectation of the poor shall not perish." See Jer. xvii. 7.

3. Long for it; for "he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

4. Pray for it; for "he hears the desire of the humble, he will prepare their hearts, and cause his ear to hear." Hannah prayed for it, and she got it. David prayed for it, and he got it.

5. Wait for it; for "the Lord is a God of judgment, blessed are all they that wait on him."

6. Study purity in heart and life: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Psal. xv. 1, and Psal. xxiv.

But now, *secondly*, you may be ready to say, You bid us trust and hope for such a visit as this of the day-spring from on high; but O will you tell me what I have to build my faith and hope upon as to this matter. In general, I would have you to remember, that faith or believing, or trusting in the Lord, is the stated way laid down to us in the word; it is the method that God has prescribed to us for receiving any good at his hand, either in time, or through eternity. We are told that "without faith, it is impossible to please God:" but, on the other hand, every thing we do, though it were but the weakest effort of obedience, pleases him, when it is done in faith. And he has established an inseparable connexion between faith and every mercy or blessing of his covenant: the covenant is, as it were, the well where the water of the Redeemer's grace and fulness is laid out to us: but faith is the bucket that draws, and the mouth that drinks it. Would you see the salvation of God? Well, believing is the way to it: "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" Would you share of the blessings of divine mercy and grace? Faith or believing is the way to get them; for "he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him round." Would you

have the Spirit of Christ, and his saving influences to rest on you? Well, this is to be had by faith: "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of *your* inheritance." So would you have a visit of the day-spring from on high? then you must take heed, in a way of believing, unto the sure word of prophecy or promise, "until the dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts," 2 Pet. i. 19.

But, say you, You bid us always believe and hope for a visit of the day-spring from on high; but what have we to build our faith and hope upon as to this matter? for my part, may the poor soul say, I have been endeavouring at the work of self-searching and examination on this occasion, and after all, I can find no ground in myself to expect that the day-spring from on high will visit me, but just on the contrary. I find upon trial, so much sin, so much ignorance, so much unbelief, so much untenderness in my way and walk, as makes me fear and apprehend, that if he visit me at all, he will visit me in a way of wrath, and not in a way of mercy; and therefore it is in vain to bid me trust or hope for a visit of the day-spring.

Answ. I would have you here carefully to remark and notice a trick of Satan, and of a deceitful and desperately wicked heart, to lead the soul off from the foundation of faith and hope that God has laid in Zion. Satan, and a deceitful heart together, are ever telling us to seek the foundation of faith and hope within ourselves; and if we cannot find it there, then they bid us say, *there is no hope*, no ground to expect any good at the hand of God; and so when a person, in obedience to the command of God, has, upon trial, found in himself a mass of iniquity, darkness and unbelief, his hands are rather more weakened for his work than before, and more discouraged. But, sirs, would you know what is the great design of self-searching and examination; it is not that you may find a ground of faith and hope within you, but that by seeing the ills of your hearts, by seeing your deadness, your darkness, your enmity, your unbelief, your wants and weakness of any created grace in you, you may be carried quite out of yourselves, to seek a ground of faith, hope, and trust, without you, in the Lord himself, and in his word. And, sirs, let me tell you, if ever you get a visit of the day-spring from on high, you must expect it upon another ground than upon any good that ever was done by you, or wrought in you. O sirs, I would fain have you brought to a cleanly way of believing, so as to rest upon Christ alone, as our Catechism well expresses it. Beware of resting on your prayers, your good preparation, your examination, your tears your repentance;

or yet beware of mingling in any of these with Christ and his righteousness, as the ground on which you expect a visit of the day-spring from on high: no, no, these old rags will not piece in with the white robe of the righteousness of Christ, they will not cement with the foundation that God has laid in Zion; and therefore rest, and trust, and hope in the Lord alone.

But, say you, O will you tell us, what is it in the Lord, or about him, that our faith and hope may fasten upon, that he will pay us a visit? I answer, There is nothing in him or about him but gives ground of hope and trust. More particularly,

1. Take a view of his name, and let faith and hope fasten upon that: Is. l. 10: "Let him that walketh in darkness, and sees no light, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." O sirs, every name of his is like ointment poured forth. Will you but think a little upon that name *Immanuel, God with us*, and see if your faith and hope can fasten upon that for a visit of the day-spring from on high to your souls: he is not only God-man in our nature, but he is *God with us;* that is, he is not in Christ a God against us, but a God for us, a God with us, a God on our side; he is on our side to take part with us against all deadly evil: Psal. cix. 31: "He standeth at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that would condemn his soul." He takes part with the sinner, to save him from his own wrath, the curse and condemnation of his own law, to save him from Satan and the world, and death and hell: he is ever with us a reconciled God, a pitying, pardoning, saving God in Christ. And therefore, say, I trust, that he who is *Immanuel, God with us*, will even pay me a visit from on high.

2. Let faith and hope for a visit fasten upon his word of grace and promise. O, may not the soul say, has he not promised, "Wherever I cause my name to be remembered, I will come unto you and bless you. Lo, I am with you, unto the end of the world." Has he not promised his presence and countenance to his own ordinances? Has he not promised to "pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground?" Has he not said, "I will be as the dew unto Israel, *that* his goings forth are prepared as the morning, *and that* he will come unto us as the rain; as the latter and former rain upon the earth, *that* the second day he will revive us, and the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight?" O has he said it, and will he not do it? has he spoken, and shall it not come to pass? Yea, he will, for "faithful is he that hath promised."

Object. But the promise is not mine, I have no claim to it.

Answ. The promise is to every one that hears it; and if you will but set to the seal of faith that God is true, it is yours in possession; and if you believe the promise, you have the thing promised.

3. Ground your faith for a visit of the day-spring from on high, upon the visits that he has already made to you. O, may faith say, did the day-spring from on high *rejoice* from eternity "in the habitable parts of the earth, and were his delights with the sons of men," before ever the foundations of the world were laid? O has he made such an amazing stoop, as to be manifested in the flesh? Is he become my brother, bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh? Has he showed such good will towards men, as to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh? And does he visit me in a gospel-dispensation and word of grace, with the offers of his grace and love, and eternal life through him? Does he stand at my door and knock, saying, "Open unto me, and I will come in?" Yet shall I doubt of his love to me? shall I doubt, whether he will come and sup with me, and I with him? Yes, surely, he will do it; for he that hath done the greater, will also do the lesser.

4. Let faith fasten upon the suretyship of Christ, or his substitution in our room and stead. He gave bond, may faith say, to his Father, for the payment of my debt, and accordingly has paid it to the uttermost farthing; he has paid my debt to the precept of the law by his perfect obedience, he has paid what I owed to the penalty of the law and justice by his death on the cross; and so he has blotted out the handwriting that was against me: he was made sin for *me*, that *I* might be made the righteousness of God in him; *he was* made a curse, that *I* might inherit the blessing;" he has made way for his visit to my soul in a way of love by the complete satisfaction of justice; and now his name is "the Lord our righteousness." And why then should I doubt but that the day-spring from on high shall pay me a visit of love?

5. Let faith fasten upon the relation that he bears to us in all his saving offices. He is "our Lord Jesus Christ; to us *this* son is given, to us *this* child is born;" he was not born for himself, but for us; and whatever he is as Mediator, that he is unto us. O he is the Saviour of sinners; and will not the sinner's Saviour pay the sinner a visit, who is looking and longing for a visit from him? He is a prophet, a teacher of the will of God; and will not the master pay the scholar a visit? He is a Priest ordained for men, and a merciful and faithful high Priest, a high Priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and may not I then call for a visit from him? He is an Advocate for the transgressor; and will not the Ad-

vocate visit his client? He is our King; and will not the King pay a visit to the subject? will he not rule and subdue his enemies in my heart? He is our Shepherd; and will not the Shepherd of Israel visit his flock? Yea, he will; for "he carries the lambs in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young." He is our Physician that came to heal the diseased, his name is *Jehovah Rophi;* and will not the Physician pay a visit to his patient? Thus, I say, let faith fix on the relation that he bears to us in his person and offices.

6. Let faith and hope for a visit of love fix on the excellency of his loving-kindness manifested in Christ, and displayed in the word of grace. O sirs, *God is love*, love is the regnant attribute of his nature; and his whole design in sending of his Son, and in a gospel dispensation, is to persuade us of his love. Now, let faith fix on this, and persuade itself, that he will come, and will not tarry. See this laid as a ground of faith and hope, Psal. xxxvi. 6: "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

7. Let faith and hope for a visit of the day-spring fix on the very design of this gospel ordinance and institution, particularly of a communion table. But this I refer till afterwards.

DISCOURSE AFTER THE TABLES.

Now, my friends, the day-spring from on high has been visiting us all in a gospel dispensation, I mean, in the word and sacrament; his light has been shining upon us: but I would ask you, by way of trial, Whether has the day dawned, and the day-star arisen in your hearts? Has the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, shined into your hearts? Oh, say you, how shall I know that the day-spring from on high has visited me by an internal revelation of himself to my soul?

I answer, 1. You may know it by the evidence of its own light. The light of day carries its own evidence with it; so the visits that Christ makes to the souls of his people, carry a self-evidencing light with them, by which the soul knows that it is he, and not another. His voice has a peculiar air with it, by which it is known, Cant ii. 8: "The voice of my beloved!" &c. "My sheep know my voice," &c. His steps have a peculiar grace with them, and therefore his steps are

called "steps of majesty;" there is something divine in his gait and way with his people. His countenance has a peculiar majesty with it, which the soul knows, and yet cannot express: Oh, says the soul, when it gets a visit, I cannot describe him, but this I can tell to my soul's satisfaction, that "his countenance is like Lebanon," and there is none like him; he has neither match in heaven nor earth, for he is indeed "fairer than the children of men."

2. You may know it by this, that the visit of this day-spring from on high is very satisfying and sweet; "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." What more sweet and refreshing than the spring of day to them that watch for the morning? So here, When Christ comes, he brings soul-contentment along with him: the man found nothing but emptiness in his comforts, in ministers, ordinances, word, and sacrament; but whenever the day-spring visit comes. Oh, says the soul, now, now, this is what I wanted: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." O, says Peter upon mount Tabor, on the top of a barren mountain, where he had neither meat nor drink, wife, nor children, "It is good to be here."—"When I awake," says the Psalmist, "I shall be satisfied with thy likeness." The soul finds such satisfaction in Christ's visits, that makes all the stars to disappear: "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

3. If the day-spring has visited thy soul, thou wilt desire more and more of this day-spring to break out from on high upon thee, Oh for more and more, and more of the Lord! as when the day-light breaks, we long for more of the light. So, here, Paul knew "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ;" but was he surfeited with it? No, though he saw all things to be but dung and loss in respect of what knowledge he had of Christ, yet he desires to know more of him, and of the power of his resurrection, he forgot what was behind: I do not speak as if I had attained to all the knowledge of Christ that I desire; no no, "I forget those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And this is one great thing that makes a believer so willing to die, because he hath seen the Lord, and he hopes when he is dead to see him as he is, to see him face to face, which he cannot have here. And therefore you that are stalled or surfeited with this communion, and think you have just enough of Christ, it is a sign that the day-spring has not been visiting you.

4. If the day-spring from on high has visited you, I am sure

it has made thy heart glad within thee. "Abraham," says Christ, "saw my day afar off, and was glad." He saw his day, the day of his incarnation, and the day of salvation to be accomplished by him, at a vast distance, and was glad. So if you have seen the spring of day in thy soul, it has made thee glad. See for this that pregnant place, Is. xxxv. 1, 2: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them: and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." And in the following verses you will see that it is such a joy as gives the weak man strength, ver. 3, the timorous faint-hearted man courage, ver. 4, and makes the dumb man to sing, and the lame man to leap, ver. 5, 6: It is a joy that transcends all worldly joy: Psal. iv. 7: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."

5. If the day-spring from on high has visited thy soul, it has left an impression of it on thy soul. I told you of some of the rays or beams of this day-spring; there is a ray of wisdom, a ray of divine power, holiness, justice, goodness, and faithfulness. Now, these rays have left a proportionable impression upon thy soul, if the day-spring has been visiting thee; for we "are made partakers of the divine nature," and are "changed into the same image, by beholding his glory;" a sight of the glorious beams of this day-spring sinks into the heart, and leaves a correspondent impression on the soul, of the communicable attributes of God.

6. If the day-spring from on high has visited thy soul, it will be known by the effect of it on thy heart and life. I name these two: (1.) A visit of this day-spring will discover much emptiness in thyself, and sink thee into nothing in thine own eyes. See this in Is. vi. Job xlii. (2.) The light of this day-spring will make you holy: "If any man say that he has seen the light, and yet walk in darkness, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him; all his religion is but a fancy. Instead of seeing the day-spring, thou hast but seen a delusion of thine own brain. A sight of the day-spring from on high will make you groan under remaining darkness, enmity, unbelief, &c. Now, I say, try by these things whether you have seen the day-spring from on high.

I shall conclude by speaking a word to two sorts of persons. 1. To you with whom it is yet midnight. 2. To you whom the day-spring has visited.

The *first* sort are those with whom it is yet midnight, whom the day-spring from on high has never visited.

1. Your condition is uncomfortable. How sad was the condition of Egypt when plagued with a darkness that might be felt! But thine is worse in the nature, and worse in the continuance; their darkness lasted but for three days, but thine will last to the days of eternity, unless infinite mercy prevent.

2. Your condition is dangerous: Prov. iv. 19: "The way of the wicked is as darkness." You know not your way: you are walking on the ridge of eternal destruction.

3. Your condition is full of horror. We read of the "horror of darkness," Gen. xv. 12. Thou art compassed with terrors on every side; the terrors of the law, the terrors of conscience, the terrors of the Almighty, the terrors of eternal miseries are all round about thee, though perhaps thou art asleep, and dost not perceive them, &c. But yet I would not leave you in this hopeless condition, but offer you a word of advice.

1. Be really convinced of your miserable case, and your own utter inability to relieve yourselves. You can no more create this divine light than you can make a sun in the firmament to arise at midnight. But, say you, to what purpose do you tell us of our impotency, for that quite discourages us from the use of means? *Answ.* We tell you of your impotency not to discourage you to use the means, but that in the use of means you may be driven out of yourselves to the Lord of light, life, and strength.

2. My advice to you is, to come to the light of the day-spring that has visited you in a gospel dispensation, look to that, till light spring in upon thy soul. This is the advice of God himself; 2 Pet. i. 19: "We have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts." Take heed to it, let all your thoughts and conceptions of God, and of the things of God, be moulded in a suitableness to that revelation; be ever looking to the Sun shining through the glass of the word, for it is through this glass that the rays of God's glory are darted or transmitted into the mind of man. We receive the Spirit of wisdom and revelation "by the hearing of faith."

3. Look to Christ, and you shall be enlightened and saved, Psal. xxxiv. 5: Is. xlv. 22. *Object.* But I am blind. *Answ.* He that opens the eyes of the blind, commands you to look; and in attempting to obey his command, light and sight come in to the soul.

The *second* sort of persons are those on whom the day-spring from on high has broken up. And these are of two sorts. 1. Some who have once in a day been visited with the day-

spring are walking in darkness. 2. Some at present enjoy the visits of the day-spring.

As to the *first*. O, may some be saying, I thought the day did once spring up in my soul, and I saw the light of the Lord; but, alas! now I "walk in darkness, and can see no light." "O that it were with me as in months past!" I thought to have got a visit of the day-spring on this occasion; but, alas! I am going away as I came; the darkness of temptation, affliction, desertion, and despondency, overspread my soul, and I think I am cast out of his sight. I shall only say two or three things:—

1. Bless God that ever the day-spring did visit thee. Thou knowest the difference between light and darkness, between absence and presence. One visit of this day-spring from on high secures thy state for ever.

2. When once the Sun of righteousness arises on a soul, though he may suffer eclipses, yet he will never set again; and therefore the Sun is in the firmament, and it is day with thee, although thou dost not see it, by reason of interposing clouds. "Ye are not of the night, but of the day."

3. My advice to you is, to "hope in God: for you shall yet praise him for the light of his countenance." It is his command, "Let Israel hope in the Lord." See God's command to you, Is. l. 10: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." And, to encourage you to hope and trust, see what the Lord says, Is. liv. 7, 8: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer."

As to the *second* sort of believers, who have the spring of day on them, have got a visit of the day-spring. Thy condition, believer, is safe; for "the Lord will be thy everlasting light." It is glorious and comfortable: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." My advice to you is,

1. Bless God who has made the day-spring to visit you, while others are left in darkness. Remember thy former darkness, and bless the Lord that has delivered thee from it, translated thee "out of darkness into his marvellous light."

2. Walk in the light of this day that has dawned on thy soul: Is. ii. 5: "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." This is Christ's counsel, John xii. 35; Eph. v. 8. Walk in the light of Christ's example, and in the light of his commandment; let them be a light to your

feet, and a lamp to your path. And "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

3. Beware of every thing that may eclipse the light of the Sun from thy soul; beware of pride, carnality, worldliness, unbelief and all untenderness in your walk, otherwise you may bring yourselves under as great darkness to your own feeling, as though the sun had never arisen on you.

4. Long for the break of the everlasting day of glory, when the sun shall never any more suffer an eclipse. The Old Testament church longed for the break of the New Testament day; and we that are under the New Testament day, should long for the break of the day of glory, saying, "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices."

Now, because there are some young persons that have been at the Lord's table, who never were at it before, therefore I conclude with a word or two to them.

1. "Keep yourselves from idols." Let nothing usurp God's room in your heart, &c.

2. Keep and "save yourselves from a present evil world," that you be not seduced or entangled with snares, &c.

3. Be on your guard; for the devil will be on you, he will seek to sift and winnow you, and to draw you back to his service, &c.

4. "Put on the whole armour of God," and be often proving it, "the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit," &c.

5. Keep Christ, the Captain of salvation, ever in your eye, that you may be supplied, strengthened, and enlightened, &c.

6. Be much on your knees at a throne of grace, "for grace and mercy to help *you* in time of need."

7. *Lastly*, Be much in studying your own emptiness, and Christ's fulness, and travel continually betwixt these two.

SERMON XV.

THE RAINBOW OF THE COVENANT SURROUNDING THE THRONE OF GRACE.*

And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.—Rev. iv. 3.

Not to stand in the entry, we may notice here three things which John saw in a vision. 1. *A throne set in heaven*, in the close of the 2d verse. 2. The glorious Majesty that *sat on the throne*, who was *like a jasper, and a sardine stone*, for brightness. 3. The canopy of the throne, *a rainbow round about* it, *in colour like unto an emerald.* I understand the whole of this to have a respect immediately to the church militant here upon earth, and the glorious dispensation of the grace of God under the New Testament economy. And that which inclines me to understand it in this view, is, because this vision is prophetical, and has a respect to things that were to be done afterward, as you see in the 1st verse, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter;" that is, things which are to be transacted in the church in the succeeding ages and generations of the world. And therefore by the *throne* here that was set in heaven, I understand the *throne of grace*, to which we are invited to "come with boldness, for grace and mercy to help in time of need," Heb. iv. 16; the throne which has justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Son of God, for its basis and foundation, Psal. lxxxix. 14; the throne of God, and of the Lamb, from which proceeds "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal," Rev. xxii. 1. And this throne is said to be "set in heaven." Not as if God's throne of grace were only in heaven properly so called; for we find the church militant on earth frequently expressed by heaven in scripture: Heb. xii. 22. She is called "the Heavenly Jerusalem," to wit, the church, 1 Pet. ii. 9; the "heavenly nation." And therefore by *heaven* here we may understand the church of God in general. And it is so called, to show that the hearts of believers, even while here upon earth, are in heaven, they are "desiring a better country, that is, a heavenly;" and when they address a throne

* Being the substance of several Sermons, preached at the sacrament, at Muckhart, June 23, 1728; and enlarged upon at Abernethy, on Saturday and Sabbath, July 5, and 6.

of grace, they have their eyes upon an exalted Christ, who is "set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," and his ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. By him that *sits on the throne*, I understand Christ, or God in our nature, not excluding the Father and the Holy Ghost; for it is "the throne of God, and of the Lamb." Ezek. i. 26. We have the same description of a throne in a vision, and we are told, that "above upon the throne was the appearance of a man," which can be applied to none other than the man Christ Jesus; and there is no doubt but it is the same throne, and the same person sitting on it, that was seen both by Ezekiel, and the apostle John. As for his posture, he is represented as "sitting upon the throne." This points at the perpetuity of his government; that he is in quiet possession of it, it being for ever out of the power of his enemies to disturb his administration. We are told here, farther, that his appearance upon the throne was "like a jasper and a sardine stone." These stones being unknown to us, we shall not take up time in telling you what is said about them by naturalists, and some curious interpreters; only we are told, in short, the *jasper* is a bright transparent stone, representing to the eye a variety of the most vivid or lively colours; the *sardine* is said to be red. The scope is plainly this, to point out the admirable and inconceivable glory and excellency of an exalted Christ. Such is the brightness of the Father's glory shining in him, now when he is upon the throne, that all the precious things on earth put together are but faint shadows and representations of his divine glory and excellency. The brightness of the *jasper*, and the redness of the *sardine stone*, are put together, to show that he is *white and ruddy;* white in his divine, ruddy in his human nature; white in his holiness, red in his suffering: the bright and glorious perfections of God, shining through the rent veil of his human nature, do as it were receive a tincture of red from the veil through which they are transmitted. In Is. lxiii. 1, 2, he is said to be *glorious*, and yet "*red in his apparel;*" and his appearance in the midst of the throne, is, as it were, of a *Lamb slain*, having the sprinkling of his blood about him, which was shed upon Mount Calvary, and which cries for "better things than the blood of Abel."

But now I come to that part of John's vision, which I have principally in view, and that is the canopy of state which covers the throne, and him that sat on it, in the close of the 3d verse: "And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."

Where, again, notice, 1. The covering of the throne; it was very stately, like *a rainbow*. 2. The circuit of this co-

vering; it was *round about the throne.* 3. The colour of it; it was *like unto an emerald.*

Here I conceive there is a manifest allusion to God's covenant with Noah, Gen. ix. When God called back the waters of the deluge from off the face of the earth, he made a promise, and bound himself by covenant, that he would never "destroy the earth any more by water;" and, in token of his faithfulness in this matter, he set *his bow in the clouds.* With allusion to this, God's throne of grace, or his mercy-seat, from which all the promises of the covenant do proceed, is said to be surrounded with *a rainbow:* to signify, that as God deals with his people in the way of a covenant, so his faithfulness in that "covenant is established in the very heavens." And this bow surrounding the throne is said to be *in colour like unto an emerald,* that is, of a green colour; to signify, that his covenant, by virtue of the faithfulness of him that sits upon the throne, is ever the same; without any shadow of turning: "The fashion of this world" withereth and "passeth away; but the word of the Lord," his word of grace and promise, "endureth for ever."

The doctrine I take notice of from the words is this:

Doct. "That God's covenant of grace, and his faithfulness engaged in it, is like a beautiful rainbow surrounding the throne of grace, for the encouragement of our faith and trust in him that sits on it."

In discoursing on this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, do these things following:—

I. Offer a few thoughts respecting the covenant of grace or promise.

II. Concerning the faithfulness of God engaged in this covenant.

III. Take a view of this covenant, under the similitude of *a rainbow, in colour like unto an emerald,* surrounding the throne of grace.

IV. Speak a little of that faith or trust which the sight of this bow of the covenant should beget in us.

V. Apply the whole.

I. The *first* thing proposed is, to *offer a few thoughts respecting the covenant of grace and promise.* And,

1. I remark, that the occasion of the covenant of grace, like that of God's covenant with Noah, was a deluge of wrath, which broke out upon Adam, and all his family, for the breach and violation of the covenant of works. This is what is pointed at, Ezek. xvi. 4—8; where you see that which

gave occasion to God's entering into a covenant of grace, is that miserable state man had brought himself into by sin: "When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, behold, thy time was the time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." Here it may readily be asked, What is that state we are reduced to by the breach of the first covenant? I answer, in short, it is a state of sin; original sin, like a contagion, has overrun all men, and the whole man "from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot." It is a state of alienation and estrangement from God; we are "alienated from the very life of God, through the ignorance that is in us;" like the prodigal, we have gone into a far country, and care not for returning to our Father's house. Yea more, it is a state of enmity and hostility against God: "The carnal mind is enmity against God," we are "enemies in our minds by wicked works." It is a godless and hopeless state; therefore are we said to be "without God, and without hope in the world." It is a state worse than Egyptian darkness; we are not simply in the dark, but we are darkness itself: "Once ye were darkness." It is a state of impotency and weakness; "for when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for us." It is a state of bondage and captivity to sin, Satan, and the world; we are led captive by these potent enemies. It is a cursed and condemned state; we are "condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on us." It is a state of death; we are dead spiritually, under the power of sin, and lying upon the very borders of eternal death. Now, this is the condition we are reduced to by the fall; upon which account we may well take up that melancholy song, "The crown is fallen from our head: wo unto us that we have sinned." However, infinite mercy and love takes occasion from this miserable and ruined state of man, to enter into a new covenant, even a covenant of grace, in order to his deliverance.

2. I remark, that the rise and spring of this covenant of grace was not foreseen faith or good works, or any thing else in the creature; but only the free and surprising love of God: John iii. 16: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jer. xxxi. 3: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." This love of God to lost sinners was altogether, and absolutely free; free in opposition to merit, free in opposition to constraint; it has no other cause but only the freedom of his own will, Eph. i. 4, 5. And as it is

free, so it is superlatively great; love that *passeth knowledge;* love which hath a height and depth, a breadth and length, which can never be fathomed, or found out. It is distinguishing love; it lighted upon men, when it passed by angels that fell; it lighted upon some of Adam's family, when it passed by others.

3. I remark that this covenant of grace, in the original make and constitution of it, was transacted with Christ as a new-covenant head, a public person, representing all the spiritual seed which the Lord had given him; for, sirs, you are aware, that since the fall of man, God never entered into any covenant with him directly and immediately, but only by the intervention of a Surety and Mediator. Hence, in our Larger Catechism, in answer to that question, 'With whom was the covenant of grace made?' the answer is, that, 'it was made with Christ, and with the elect in him, as his seed.' Hence it is that we read of "grace given us in Christ, before the world began." In this covenant there are some things that relate particularly to Christ himself as Surety and Redeemer, and some things in it that relate to the members and seed of Christ. The Father having promised sufficient furniture and through-bearing to his Son, both for the purpose and application of our redemption; the Son, not only undertakes to satisfy justice, to fulfil the law, to bruise the head of the old serpent, but also by his Spirit, which he would send into their hearts, to sprinkle them with clean water, to "take away the stony heart," to enlighten them, to justify them, to adopt and sanctify them, and at last to present them "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." And when all this comes to be revealed and set forth in a gospel dispensation, what is incumbent upon us, but to subscribe to this glorious transaction and plan of redemption, that was laid by Infinite Wisdom? Thus, I say, the covenant of grace was originally transacted with Christ, and with us in him, and through him. And they who, either in print or pulpit ridicule or exclaim against this, as a new scheme of doctrine, do not ridicule us, but the doctrine asserted by the church of Scotland in her standards; which, as it is founded upon the word of God, so we are bound by solemn covenant to cleave to it.

4. I remark, that the revelation of this covenant of grace, transacted with "Christ, before the world began," was made very early to our first parents in Paradise, immediately after the fall: Gen. iii. 15: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." Here it was that the grand secret, which lay in the breast of God, did first break forth. When our first parents were waiting, with a trembling heart, every moment for the execution of the sentence of the broken cove-

nant of works; behold, glad tidings of great joy are issued out from a throne of grace; namely, that in the fulness of time, the Son of God was to take on the seed of the woman, and bruise the serpent's head, to destroy the devil and his works, and redeem man from that gulf of misery into which he was plunged. This was the covenant of grace. And it is remarkable, that in its first edition, it came forth in a promise of Christ; this was enlarged and explained to Abraham, Moses, David, and yet more fully opened after the Babylonish captivity, by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets, till Christ himself actually came, in whom all the Old Testament types, prophecies, and promises, received their full accomplishment. And having by his death "confirmed the covenant with many," the covenant of grace, after his resurrection and exaltation, came forth in its last and best edition; namely, in the form of a "testament," having the two great sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper appended to it, as full and incontestable evidences of its being confirmed by his death. This glorious charter has now passed the seal, and therefore faith may make use of it with boldness.

5. I remark, that this covenant of grace, or testament of our Lord Jesus Christ, may be viewed and considered in its dispensation or exhibition. God, in his infinite wisdom, for reaching the great end and design of a covenant of grace, has appointed ordinances, the word, sacraments, and prayer, and other proper means, by which the benefits of his death, and blessings of his covenant, may come to be actually applied to us; he has authorized ministers to dispense the word and sacraments, that by these, as through conduit pipes, his grace and fulness may be communicated to us. And here it should be remembered, that the covenant of grace, in the dispensation and exhibition of it, comes to every man's door; it is presented as the ground and foundation of faith in common to all the hearers of the gospel, elect and reprobate. We call all and every one to take hold of God's covenant, and tell them, "To you is the word of this salvation sent; The promise," or covenant, "is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

6. I remark, that this covenant of grace may be considered in the application and execution of it. And this is either initiatory, progressive, or consummate. (1.) I say, there is the initiatory application, or the soul's first entry into the bond of the covenant; or rather, the Spirit of the great new covenant Head taking hold of the poor soul, and the soul at the same moment taking hold of the covenant by faith, receives it as a good and sufficient security for that life and

happiness, which was lost by the sin of the first Adam. This is in scripture called "the day of espousals," in which the soul does as it were, sign and subscribe the marriage-contract, saying, "I am the Lord's." (2.) There is the farther improvement of this covenant of grace, for the soul's daily supply in a way of believing, by which it is made to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is called a "drawing water with joy out of the wells of salvation." The believer finding himself under this and the other want, improves the promises of the covenant, as they are suited and adapted to his case. And thus the work of sanctification is daily advanced: "they shall go from strength to strength." (3.) There is the full execution of the designs of this covenant, when the soul is brought to glory, and "presented faultless before the presence of God, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." At that day, the covenant, and all the concerns of it, are fully executed and performed, even *the day of Jesus Christ:* Phil. i. 6: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." So much for the *first* thing proposed, which was, to give you some views of the covenant of grace.

II. *The second* thing was, to *speak a little of the faithfulness of God engaged in the covenant, which is here resembled to the rainbow about the throne, in colour like unto an emerald.* For the illustration of this head, I shall, 1. Inquire what the faithfulness of God implies. 2. How far this faithfulness is engaged in the covenant.

For the *first*, I shall clear it in the following particulars:—

1. God's covenant of grace or promise is no hasty or indeliberate deed, but the result of his eternal purpose and counsel. Men many times speak before they think; and when they have passed their word, they would be content to eat it in again, because they speak frequently before they consider matters duly. But no such thing is incident to God; his promise is nothing else than a revelation of his counsel and purpose of grace before the world began; and therefore every word he speaks is sure and stable, like mountains of brass, which cannot be shaken.

2. God thinks as he speaks in his covenant and promise. I remember it is given as the character of a true citizen of Zion, that "he speaks the truth in his heart," Psal. xv. 2; that is, his words and his thoughts agree together; the one is the exact transcript or copy of the other. And if this be the character of the citizens of Zion, much more is it so of Zion's

God and King, who "desires truth in the inward parts." He does not say one thing, and think another; he hates all disingenuousness in others, and therefore cannot be guilty of it himself: his words are so much the picture of his heart, that we may lawfully and warrantably look into his heart in and by the words of his mouth.

3. God cannot forget his covenant and promise. Men will many times make promises, and forget them as soon as they are made; but it cannot be so with God, "he is ever mindful of his covenant," his mercy and truth is ever before his face. And therefore it is an unjust reflection on a God of truth, to say or think that he has "forgotten to be gracious." A woman may sooner forget her sucking child, than God can forget his children, or his promise made to them. He remembers every good word or thought of ours, and has a book of remembrance for them; surely then he will not, he cannot, forget his own word of promise. It is true, (Is. xliii. 26,) we are commanded to "put him in remembrance;" and, accordingly David, (Psal. cxix. 49,) says to God, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." But this is not to be understood, as if God needed to have his memory helped by us; but only to excite us to our duty, to quicken us to faith and fervency in prayer, according to the direction, Ezek. xxxvi. 37: "For these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel, that I may do it for them."

4. God cannot change his mind. Our unbelieving hearts are ready sometimes to suggest, that when God made the promise, he might have thoughts of grace and love in his heart, but perhaps now he has altered his way of thinking; his thoughts have taken another turn. But this cannot be, for "he is of one mind, and who can turn him?" there is "no variableness," or so much as a "shadow of turning" with him; he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Psal. cii. 25—27: "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." Whatever changes there may be in his carriage towards us, yet there can be no change in his heart; consequently, no change or alteration in his covenant.

5. As God never changes his mind, so he never breaks his word; he always performs what he promises. Many a time the believer has found him better than his word, but never worse than his word. This is what Joshua observed in his last speech to Israel, Jos. xxiii. 14: "And ye know in all your

hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." As if he had said, I appeal to your conscience if he has not been a faithful God in performing his promise to you. Thus you see wherein the faithfulness of God consists.

For the *second*, to wit, how far the faithfulness of God is engaged in the covenant of grace? I answer, it is so far engaged, that he has given all the security that it is possible for God to give. For,

1. His covenant is subscribed, and that with his own blood. God, as it were, dips his pen in the heart-blood of his own Son, and therewith subscribes the covenant. Hence the blood of Christ is called "the blood of the testament,—This is the New Testament in my blood."

2. The covenant of grace is not only subscribed, but attested by a glorious Trinity, in the capacity of three witnesses: 1 John v. 7: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one."

3. It is a sealed bargain, sealed with the oath of God, in which he has pawned his very life for the performance of it. He gave his oath to the covenant Head; Psal. lxxxix. 35: "Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David." He gives his oath to the seed of Christ; Heb. vi. 17: "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath." It is sealed with the death of the Testator, Heb. ix. 16—18. It is sealed with the sacraments of baptism and the supper, which are like the delivering of earth and stone upon an enfeoffment. And the moment that a sinner takes hold of it, he seals it upon the heart by his Holy Spirit; Eph. i. 13: "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance."

4. This covenant or testament has the faithfulness of God so far engaged in it, that for farther security, it is registered in heaven among the antiquities of the land afar off, Psal. cxix. 89: "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven;" registered upon earth, "in the volume of his book," which is a "more sure word of prophecy," than an immediate voice from heaven; and therefore "we do well to take heed to it, as to a light shining in a dark place." This much for the *second* thing proposed.

III. The *third* thing in the method was, to *take a view of this covenant of grace, and the faithfulness of God engaged in it*,

under the similitude and representation of a rainbow surrounding the throne, in colour like unto an emerald. And here I shall endeavour to do these three things. 1. View the covenant under the similitude of a *rainbow.* 2. Inquire why this bow is said to be *round about the throne.* 3. Why it is said to be *in colour like unto an emerald.*

First, I say, I would view the covenant of grace under this metaphor of the rainbow in the text.

1. Then, the rainbow was of God's setting: "I have set my bow in the clouds." So the covenant of grace is of God's making: "I have made a covenant with my chosen.—Hear, and your souls shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.—I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will never turn away from them to do them good." Beware of thinking that the covenant is of your making. It is, indeed, your duty to take hold of God's covenant, and to come under engagements, through the grace thereof, to observe all the duties commanded in the law: but do not think that your engaging, or promising and covenanting, can make or constitute the covenant of grace: no, it is God that both makes the covenant, and leads our heart and hand in taking hold of it, and in engaging to these duties of obedience, which are consequent to our being in covenant with the Lord: Heb. viii. 10: "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." The covenant of grace is as much of God's making, as the forming of the bow in the clouds, which cannot be done by the hands of men.

2. The bow was set in the clouds upon God's smelling a sweet savour in Noah's sacrifice; as you will see in the close of the eighth and ninth chapters of the book of Genesis. So here, upon Christ, our blessed Noah, engaging to make himself a sacrifice to justice in our room and stead, and God smelling a sweet savour in his death and satisfaction, God sets his bow of the covenant in his church. O sirs, if it had not been for the satisfaction which our Surety offered, this bow of the covenant had never appeared in our heavens.

3. God's bow in the clouds is a security against the waters of the deluge, that they shall never return any more to destroy the earth: and, indeed, the bow in the heaven is a greater security against it, than the sands and rocks with which it is surrounded. So the covenant of grace, founded upon, and sealed with the blood of the Lamb, is a glorious security against the devouring deluge of divine wrath, that it shall never return to destroy any soul that by faith flees to

Christ, and takes shelter under the covert of his blood and righteousness. Whenever a man sees the rainbow, it yields him peace and safety against the fears of another deluge, though ever such hurricanes or tempests were blowing out of the heavens: though the sea were roaring, and its waves swelling, as though it would swallow up the dry land; yet the sight of God's bow in the clouds puts us out of fear of a universal deluge. So, here, whenever a poor soul by faith takes a view of the bow of the covenant surrounding God's throne of grace, it yields him peace; he is made to see, that whatever be God's dispensations, whatever be the appearance of his providences; yet the deluge of his vindictive wrath having spent itself upon the Surety, justice itself becomes the sinner's security, by virtue of the covenant of grace: Is. liv. 9: "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee."

4. The rainbow (as naturalists think) is just a reflection of the beams of the sun; and it is the sun that gives being to the rainbow: take away the sun out of the firmament, there would be no rainbow in the clouds. So, here, it is Christ, the *Sun of righteousness*, that gives being to the covenant of grace; he is the very life and substance of it: "I will give thee for a covenant of the people." What are all the promises of the covenant, but the rays of grace and love flowing out from Christ, "the brightness of the Father's glory?" All the promises are "in him," and in him they are "yea and amen."—Take away Christ, and the promise is not, the covenant is not.

5. Although the arch of the bow is high above us, reaching to the heaven; yet the extremes of it stoop down to the earth, and come near to every man; yea, one would think, wherever he is, or whatever place of the world he is in, still the end of the rainbow is pointing towards him. Just so it is with the covenant of grace; although the great covenant-head be in heaven, yet the covenant itself stoops down to men upon earth, Rom. x. 6—8: "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above,) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead;) but what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach." By the "righteousness of faith," spoken of in the sixth verse, some of our best interpreters do understand the covenant of grace; which is so called, because therein God brings near his righteousness to us; yea, the covenant of grace in the dispensation of it, like the bow

in the clouds, points to every man, saying, "To you is the word of this salvation sent." The covenant is indefinite, no man's name is mentioned, no man's name excluded; but, as it were, a blank left for every man to put in his own name by an applicatory faith.

6. God's bow in the clouds is very extensive, reaching from the one end of heaven to the other: so God's covenant of grace is a large and wide covenant. Though all Adam's posterity were gathered together, there would be room for them, within the arches of the rainbow. God's covenant of grace is a large and wide covenant; there is room in it for you, room for me, and room for all mankind. God's voice is to every one to take hold of it, for every one to come within the circuit of it: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money let him come." *You that have* spent "your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which profiteth not," you are called to take hold of it, Is. lv. 1, 2.

7. As the rainbow is a security against a universal deluge, so it is a prognostic of a refreshing shower of rain to the thirsty earth. So this bow of the covenant that is surrounding the throne of grace, as it secures against vindictive wrath, so it prognosticates, yea gives the greatest assurance of the rain of the Spirit's influences. It is an article of the covenant, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: and he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon: I will come unto them as the rain; as the latter and former rain unto the earth." As it seldom or never fails, that a man looks upon the rainbow, but a shower shortly follows it: so it never fails, when a man looks by faith to the bow of the covenant, and the faithfulness of God in it, but some refreshing rain of the dew of heaven falls on his soul: Eph. i. 13: "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." John xi. 40: "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?"

8. The visible and sensible appearance of the rainbow is but of a short continuance; for ordinarily it appears for a little and then vanishes. So the sensible and lively views that the believer gets of the covenant of grace, in its beauty, order, freedom, fulness, and stability, are ordinarily but of a short continuance: It is "a rare hour, and a short stay," said one of the ancients.

9. Although the rainbow disappear, and that for a long while together, yet we do not conclude upon that account that God's covenant with us is broken, or that the waters will return again to destroy the earth: no, the remembrance of the rainbow set in the clouds, though a man has not seen it

but once in his life; I say, the very remembrance of the bow makes us easy, and persuades us that the deluge shall not return again. So here, whenever God discovers this bow of the covenant surrounding the throne of grace, when he has determined thy soul to "take hold of" it, although thou dost not see it in such a sensible manner now as thou hast seen it formerly, yet the very remembrance of this covenant may make thy soul easy against the fears of wrath, because the veracity and faithfulness of God in the covenant is the same without any variableness, however matters may be with thee, as to thy present sense and feeling. Thus, you see in what respects God's covenant is resembled to the bow which he has set in the clouds.

For the *second* question, why this bow is said to be *round about the throne?*

I answer, 1. This signifies the glorious majesty of a God of grace in Christ; for, as I told you, it is represented as a canopy of state covering the throne, which is a badge of majesty. O sirs, honour and majesty are before the face of a God in Christ, his throne of grace is encircled with the glory of grace, grace lies scattered about the throne on every hand; and this shows his glorious greatness.

2. The rainbow being set round about the throne of grace, may perhaps signify this; that there is access to the throne of grace on every hand, or from every quarter. Whatever part of the covenant you look to, whatever article, whatever promise you cast your eye upon, you will still find it leading you directly to a throne of grace for grace to help you: Ezek. xxxvi. 37: "For these things," to wit, for the blessings promised, "I will be inquired of" at a throne of grace "by the house of Israel, that I may do it for them."

3. The throne of grace is said to be surrounded with the rainbow, to show the stability of every promise, or of every act of grace, that is issued out from a throne of grace. Every part of the covenant is sure; every promise of it is more firm than the pillars of heaven; the faithfulness of God is in every promise, and therefore one jot or tittle of it cannot fall to the ground.

4. It is said to go about the throne, to show the connexion that there is among all the parts of the covenant. As every part of a circle leads to another part of it; so the covenant of grace connects one blessing with another, one blessing draws another after it; effectual calling brings justification, justification brings adoption, sanctification, perseverance, and increase of grace, and grace brings glory with it hereafter. As when you take hold of the least link of a chain, you bring the whole chain with you; so, here, if you have one blessing,

you have all; if you receive Christ, you have all in him, he brings all along with him.

5. The rainbow about the throne may signify, that there is no access to a throne of grace, no ground for faith to stand upon, in its approaches to the throne, but only by virtue of the covenant, and the faithfulness of God engaged in it. It is folly for people to think of coming to a throne of grace, for grace and mercy, while they overlook and neglect God's covenant, and his veracity pledged in it.

A *third* question was, Why this bow of the covenant is said to be *in colour like unto an emerald?* I shall not stay on this: only, in one word, I think that it points at the perpetuity of the covenant; it is ever the same, like an evergreen, it never withers or decays. O sirs, this world is withering, it is *waxing old as a garment*, the *fashion* of it is *passing away;* you yourselves are withering; your beauty, strength, stature, and other excellencies, are fading like a moth; your frame, perhaps, will wither in a little, however agreeable it may be. Though you were upon mount Tabor, beholding Christ in his glory, yet that will not last; in a little your prosperous state, and your mountain that seems to stand firm, may be shaken through the hidings of the Lord's countenance. But here is what may be relief under all; God's covenant is *in colour like unto an emerald*, continually green, without any decay. I think it very remarkable, that when God is sending Moses to the children of Israel, in order to bring them out of the land of Egypt, he puts him in mind of the covenant that God made with Abraham, in which he said, that he would bring them out of Egypt. Well, what way does God take to confirm the faith of Moses, and of the children of Israel, respecting his faithfulness? he bids him tell the children of Israel, "I AM hath sent me unto you." As if he had said, Do not think that I have forgotten my covenant and promise to Abraham: no, "I am that I am;" I am the same this day as I was four hundred years ago, when I spoke to Abraham upon this head, and my promise is as fresh with me, as it was that day I made it. The apostle says, Heb. x. 33, "Faithful is he who hath promised." So it reads in our translation; but in the original Greek the words may be read, "Faithful is he who is promising." We are not to look upon God's covenant and promise as a thing that is past, and out of date: no, he is a promising God to us, as much as when the promise first passed out of his blessed lips: it is an evergreen, it is *in colour like unto an emerald; he is ever mindful of his covenant;* and as *justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne*, so his *mercy*, wrapped up in the word of

truth, is still *going before his face.* This much for the *third* thing in the method.

IV. The *fourth* thing in the method was, to *inquire a little into the faith and trust, which the consideration of all this should beget in us.* And for clearing of it, I shall go no farther than the representation made in the text. What do you think when the rainbow appears in the heavens; the same you are to do with relation to the bow in the covenant, and the faithfulness of God engaged in it.

1. When the bow appears in the heaven, you behold it, you look upon it with your eyes, for it is a beautiful appearance; you consider and inquire for what end there is such an appearance in the heavens. Now, the same you are to do with God's covenant of grace, the bow, that he has set in the heaven of his church, about his throne of grace which he has reared up. It is absolutely impossible that ever you can reap any benefit by God's covenant, unless you behold it, consider it, and study to know and understand it; there must be an uptaking of the secrets of the covenant. And this is the first thing that ever God does, when he is to bring the soul within the bond of his covenant, he enlightens the mind with the knowledge of Christ, the great covenant Head; he makes the man to think upon and consider the fulness, freedom, the comely order and stability of the covenant, as a covenant of grace and peace, having all our salvation wrapped up in it.

2. When a man sees the rainbow in the heaven, and knows that it is a token of God's covenant with mankind, that "the waters shall not return to destroy the earth," he assents to the truth of the covenant, or promise of God; he believes that it is true, that God made such a promise; and that God who promised such a thing, will not break his word, but that he will make it good. So, here, when you see the bow of the covenant of grace, and the veracity of God pawned therein; when you see it sealed with the oath of God, and the blood of his eternal Son, your duty is to assent to the truth of God pledged in the covenant, because he has "righteousness *for* the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness *for* the girdle of his reins." O, will the soul say, I see every promise of God to be true, it is impossible for him to lie; and therefore I set to my seal that he is true.

3. When a man sees the bow in the cloud, he concludes that he himself in particular is safe from the waters of the sea, that they shall not overflow him; he rests upon the veracity of the Promiser; and so makes himself easy against the fears of a second deluge. So here, when we see God's covenant like a bow surrounding his throne, we should rest

with assured confidence upon it as a good security against wrath, a good security for our everlasting happiness, for peace, pardon, grace, and glory. The covenant is God's charter for eternal life, and the soul accordingly takes it, and says, "This is all my salvation," that "he hath made with me" in Christ "an everlasting covenant," and "in this will I be confident." Indeed, if God can break his covenant, I am undone, I will sink in the mighty waters of his wrath: but God's covenant cannot be broken; it stands fast for ever; "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of his peace shall never be removed:" and therefore I am sure, God will not betray me, his covenant will not deceive me. And all this is just what is called a "taking hold of God's covenant," Is. lvi. 4.

V. The *fifth* thing proposed, is the *use* of this doctrine. All the use I will make of it at this time, is in these few inferences. Is it so that God's covenant of grace, and his faithfulness engaged in it, is like a rainbow surrounding the throne, for our encouragement to trust him? then,

1. See hence the amazing glory and beauty of the throne of grace to which we are invited and called to come. Every thing in and about this throne has glory, beauty, and majesty in it. He that sits on it is like the *sardine* and *jasper stone;* they that behold him, or who are about the throne, are so dazzled with his glory, that they cry day and night, "Holy holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come," Rev. iv. 8: they worship him, and cast their crowns down before his throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." O how majestic is the appearance of a God in Christ! how majestic is his throne, high and lifted up! how majestic is his retinue, filling the wide temple of heaven and earth!

2. See hence the ground that the assurance of faith goes upon in drawing near to a throne of grace: why, it goes upon the ground of the divine veracity pledged in a covenant of grace; it sees this bow about the throne, and this gives the man courage and confidence. Abraham's faith builded its assurance here; Rom. iv. 20, 21: "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform." If you were putting up that petition, sirs, to God, that he would hem in the waters of the ocean, and bind up the fountains of the great deep, that the waters might not return to overflow the earth; I am persuaded that you would ask it with full assurance of faith, not doubting his veracity respecting your being heard in that petition; why, because

God has promised that "the waters shall no more return to destroy the earth;" and he has set his bow in the cloud as a token of his veracity in that matter. Well, I am sure you have as firm a ground to build your faith upon, when you draw near to a throne of grace, to ask of him things agreeable to his will, things promised in the covenant of grace, peace, pardon, and salvation, through a Redeemer; you have the veracity of the same God pledged; not only his veracity, but his power, his holiness, and other perfections. Yea, God's covenant of grace that is made with us in Christ, is more firm than God's covenant with Noah; for, as you have heard, this covenant of grace is attested by the three that bear record in heaven," it is sealed with the oath and blood of God, and registered "in the volume of his book." And, therefore, whenever you go to a throne of grace for any mercy, keep your eye upon the bow of the covenant, and the faithfulness of God pledged in it, that so you may hope, and trust, and believe without staggering.

3. See hence the way how to be supported and relieved under all pressures of trouble of whatever kind, whether from without or from within. My friends, you have been at a communion table, and I hope you have been upon the mount with God, feeding upon "fat things full of marrow;" now we are about to part, we are going out again to the wide world, and God knows what deep seas, what tempestuous waves and storms from earth and hell may be abiding us. Well, whatever may befall you, I give you this advice, to keep your eyes always upon the rainbow of the covenant about the throne, of which you have been getting a sensible seal in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; especially in the cases following, and you shall find wonderful relief and support, as David did to his experience, Psal. xxvii. 13: "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

1*st*, Perhaps, then, poor believer, a storm of vindictive wrath in appearance may blow from heaven, which will startle thy conscience to that degree, that thou shalt be made to cry, through a sense of guilt, and the impressions of God's anger on thy soul, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." Well, if that happen to be thy case, as I know not but it may, look to the rainbow of the covenant about the throne, and there you shall see the faithfulness of God engaged, that vindictive wrath shall never touch thee. Read for this, Isaiah liv. 7—10. There you see the oath of God is passed, that the deluge of vindictive anger shall no more return to destroy thee: and

what more wouldst thou have? will unbelief dare to charge God with perjury?

2*dly*, Perhaps, believer, a storm of trouble from the world may blow upon thee, times of public calamity may come, days of persecution for righteousness' sake; or, if that fail, a storm of personal trial may be abiding thee, trouble in thy name, in thy estate, in thy family or relations; the storm may blow so hard as to sweep away all that is dear to thee in a world. Well, say you, what shall I do in that case? Why, my advice to you is, to cast the eye of faith upon the bow of the covenant, and there thou shalt find what will cheer and keep up thy heart; there thou shalt find thy covenanted God in Christ promiseth his sympathy in all thy troubles: Is. lxiii. 9: "In all their affliction he is afflicted." Psal. ciii. 13: "Like as a father pitieth his children; so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." There you shall find him engaged to go through the fire and water with thee: Is. xliii. 2: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." There you will find him engaging himself by covenant to carry thy head above: Is. xli. 10: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee:—I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteouness." There thou shalt find him engaged to bring thee safely through all thy troubles: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Thou shalt find that thy light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work for thee a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

3*dly*, Perhaps a storm from hell may be abiding thee, "principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world;" the armed legions of the bottomless pit, like the "bulls of Bashan," may ere long be goring at thee. Well, in this case look to the throne of grace, and to the bow of the covenant that surrounds it, and thou shalt find what may, and will relieve thee; you will find that Christ has, according to the first article of the covenant, "bruised the head of that serpent, spoiled principalities and powers, triumphed over them, and made a show of them openly on his cross;" he "has destroyed death, and him that had the power of death." There thou wilt find him engaged to stand by thee as thy leader and commander, to make thee "tread Satan under thy feet shortly!" and by faith acted upon this covenant, thou art assured of the victory, yea, that thou art a conqueror, and "more than a conqueror, through him that loved thee."

4*thly*, Perhaps, believer, thou may in a little time find the

strong man of indwelling sin, like Samson after his locks were cut, recover strength, and begin to rage in thy soul, insomuch that thou shalt be made to cry with the apostle, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Well, in that case look to the throne of grace, and the bow of the covenant, and thou shalt find God engaging himself to give grace and mercy, to help thee in this time of need: Rom. vi. 14: he has said "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Micah vii. 19: "I will subdue their iniquities." Ezek. xxxvi. 25: "From all their filthiness, and from all their idols will I cleanse them." Is. lix. 19: "When the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

5*thly*, Perhaps in a little time Satan and corruption together may give thee a trip, and lay thee on thy back, and as it were tread thee in the mire, so that thy "own clothes shall abhor thee;" and what shall be done in that case? Well, even in that case look up to the throne, and behold the "exalted Prince that gives repentance and remission of sin," that he may lift thee up again, and "by the blood of his covenant, bring thee out of the pit, wherein there is no water." Take a view of the bow of the covenant, and thou wilt find written upon the arch of this bow, that "though thou hast lien among the pots, *he will make thee* as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." Listen to his voice that sits upon the throne, and thou wilt hear him saying, "Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me, saith the Lord."

6*thly*, Perhaps a black and melancholy night of desertion may overtake thee in thy way; God may hide, and thou be brought to cry with the church, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Well, though thou "walk in darkness, and see no light, yet trust in the name of the Lord, and stay thyself upon *him*," by virtue of the covenant, as *thy God;* for here he is engaged, that he will be "thy God for ever," that he will "never leave thee nor forsake thee," as to his real presence; and that "though weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning.—For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."

7*thly*, Perhaps you may fall under the melancholy fears and apprehensions, that thou shalt be so left of God, as to prove an apostate in the end. Well, look up to the bow of the covenant about the throne, and thou wilt find security against that also: Phil. i. 6: "He which hath begun the

good work in thee, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." Grace and glory are connected by the covenant so inseparably, that they can never be divorced: Psal. lxxxiv. 11: "The Lord will give grace and glory."

8*thly*, Perhaps thou may in a little fall under a melancholy deadness and indisposition of heart; the *spices of the garden*, that seem now to be sending out *their smell*, may wither, and thou may be crying, *I am a dry tree*. Well, in that case, look up to the throne of grace, and thy glorious Head sitting on the throne, and thou wilt see thy life in him: "Our life is hid with Christ in God.—Because I live, ye shall live also.—After two days, will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.—I will be as the dew unto Israel, and they shall revive as the corn," Hos. vi. and xiv.

9*thly*, Perhaps "the terrors of death" may shortly take hold on thee, poor believer; the dark curtains of the grave, and the shadows of the land of forgetfulness may begin to stretch themselves upon thee: O! what shall be done in that case? I answer, even in that case look up and take hold of the bow of the covenant surrounding the throne; as David did, when his latter end was approaching, "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." The same holy man, (Psal. xxiii.) viewing the covenant, and God engaged to be with him in death, cries out, (ver. 4,) "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." See a sweet promise of the covenant to this purpose, Hos. xiii. 14: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues! O grave, I will be thy destruction!"

But, after all, you may perhaps say, These things may yield excellent support and relief to the believer that has taken hold of God's covenant, and gotten within the arches of the bow; but I fear I am none of these. An answer to this leads me to the *last* use of the doctrine; which I do not design to enlarge upon at present. Only let me exhort and call all hearing me, whether believers or unbelievers, to put this matter out of doubt, presently without delay, by taking hold of God's covenant, here represented by the "rainbow surrounding the throne, in colour like unto an emerald."—Sirs, ye cannot gripe the natural rainbow with the hands of your body; but when you see it, you gripe at God's covenant

with Noah by an act of trust or believing, that God, according to that covenant, will deliver you from a deluge of water. Well, do the same in the present case; gripe or take hold of God's covenant of grace, and his faithfulness engaged in it, through Christ, for your deliverance and freedom from the deluge of eternal wrath, which threatens to swallow you up for ever and ever. But I go no farther at present.

THE SUBSTANCE OF SOME DISCOURSES.*

And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.—Rev. iv. 3.

I proceed to the *last* use which I designed to make of the doctrine, and that is by way of *Exhortation.*

Is it so, that the covenant of grace, and the faithfulness of God engaged in it, is like *a rainbow round about the throne, in colour like unto an emerald?* Then my exhortation to all hearing me is, to answer the design, and improve this manifestation and display of the grace of God. Why has he set the rainbow of his covenant round about his throne, but that sinners who are far off may be encouraged to come and enter in within God's covenant, and take hold of his faithfulness pledged therein, that they may "obtain mercy, and find grace *at a* throne of grace, to help *them* in time of need?" When you see the bow in the clouds, you remember God's covenant with Noah, and believe that you are safe against a second deluge of water, not for any good deed done by you to deserve such a thing, but because of the veracity of God pledged in his covenant with Noah: so, when you see the bow of the covenant about a throne of grace, improve it as a security against the deluge of wrath, which was stopped and recalled upon the satisfaction and death of Christ; improve it, I say, for this and all the other blessings that lie wrapped up in the large bosom of it.

But now, that I may set this exhortation in a clearer light, I shall endeavour, through divine assistance,

1. To show of what the rainbow of the covenant of grace is a sign.

1. Show what it is to improve this rainbow of the covenant.

3. What are these blessings or privileges that lie within the circle of this rainbow, and of which the soul comes to be

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possessed, either in part or in whole, that moment that it takes hold of God's covenant.

4. Who they are that may warrantably come within the compass of this rainbow.

5. Roll away some impediments or stumbling-stones that lie in the way of the sinner, and which have a fatal influence to discourage him from taking the benefit of the rainbow of the covenant which is about the throne.

6. Offer a few advices, in order to your improving the rainbow of the promise or covenant, for your safety against the deluge of wrath that threatens you upon the account of sin.

1. The *first* thing proposed is, to inquire of what this rainbow of the covenant is a sign. You know the rainbow in the visible heavens is a sign of something; and so is this spiritual rainbow of the covenant. As,

1*st*, It is a sign that the first covenant is broken, and that "the wickedness of man was great upon the earth;" for which cause "the fountains of the great deep" of God's wrath were opened like a mighty sea, sweeping all Adam's family to the bottomless pit. When we see the bow in the heavens, we remember the flood of Noah, which was sent to take vengeance upon the old world for their sin; so when we view the rainbow of the covenant, we should remember the flood of divine wrath and vengeance, that is broken out against the whole family and race of mankind. The broad flying roll of the curse of God is gone forth over the face of the whole earth, because of the sin of man: Gal. iii. 10: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Remember this when you see the bow of the covenant of grace round about the throne of grace.

2*dly*, This rainbow of the covenant is a sign that a ransom is found out, and that the sacrifice of our great Noah, is accepted; that God has smelled a sweet savour in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. You know the rainbow was set up in the heavens, after God had accepted of Noah's sacrifice; and when we see God's bow in the clouds, we remember this: so, when we look upon a covenant of grace, we ought to remember the death and satisfaction of Jesus, as the very ground and foundation of God's dealing with sinners in a way of grace. When we behold the covenant, we should behold the blood of the covenant, behold the red streams of this rainbow: Zech. ix. 11: "By the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water." I have read, that in Holland, where most of their country is taken off the sea by strong dikes, if the sea at any time happen to make a breach, by which the country is in danger of

being laid under water, any man that observes the breach, is by the law of the country, ordered to stop the breach, if possible, though it were with his most valuable packs of goods, and he has reparation from the community. O sirs! sin has made a breach for the inundation of God's wrath to break in upon the whole race of Adam; and the breach was so wide, and the current of wrath so rapid and strong, that it would have swallowed up and swept away the whole creation of angels and men, if they had been cast in to stop it. The glorious Son of God, perceiving that nothing else would do it, cast his own body into the breach; "he redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Let us remember this, when we remember the bow about the throne.

3*dly*, The bow of the covenant, as it is set up in the heaven of the visible church, is a sign that the deluge of God's wrath is recalled, and that God is a God of peace toward sinners, through the atoning blood of the Lamb. Sirs, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, the waters of the deluge of God's wrath are so far abated and fallen, that the olive-branch is brought forth to your view by God's ministers. We preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things to you; we tell you in the name of God, that he is so well pleased with the ransom that he has found, that he declares "fury is not in him," that "though he was angry, his anger is" now "turned away:" and if ye will not believe his word, take his oath for it, in which he has pawned his very life: Ezek. xxxiii. 11: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

4*thly*, The rainbow in the clouds is a sign of God's faithful promise, that no man shall be ruined by a universal deluge. Indeed, if a man will stand within the sea-mark till the waters of the sea overflow him, there is no help for that; God's faithfulness in his covenant with Noah stands firm, though the man perish. So here, the rainbow about the throne of grace is a sign of God's faithfulness in a word of promise, that no man shall perish, who will take the advantage of the dry-land that stands before him in the gospel. Indeed, if a man will by unbelief stand still within the sea-mark of God's wrath till he perish, there is no help for that; but the faithfulness of God in the covenant of grace stands firm, and shall not be "made of none effect" through his folly. But I say "whosoever believeth," or taketh hold of the faithfulness of God pledged in his covenant, "shall not perish, but have everlasting life;" the deluge of wrath shall never touch him. This much for the *first* thing, namely, what this rainbow about the throne, in colour like unto an emerald, is a sign of.

2. The *second* thing was, to inquire what it is to improve this rainbow of the covenant? I answer, as it is well expressed in our Confession of Faith, chap. xiv. § 2, at the close, 'It is to believe in Christ, or to accept, receive, and rest upon him alone, for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.' This is a very material expression, and I fear little noticed by the generality of people; *a resting upon Christ, by virtue of the covenant of grace.* As we rest upon a man, by virtue of his word or promise; so we rest upon Christ, by virtue of the covenant, and the promises of it. It is observable here in the text, that the rainbow is round about the throne, and him that sits on it; so that there could be no coming to the throne, or Christ sitting on it, without coming within the rainbow: so there is no coming to Christ, no true believing in him, but by virtue of his word of grace and promise in a covenant of grace. And this is one main difference between true saving faith, and the presumptuous faith of hypocrites. Hypocrites, by a presumptuous faith, will indeed gripe at Christ and salvation; but in the mean time they do not receive Christ and his benefits as they lie within the rainbow, they do not receive and improve him by virtue of the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace, or the promise of God in Christ, it is his testament, bond, or disposition, in which he assigns and makes over himself, his righteousness, his Spirit, his fulness, and all the blessings of his purchase. Now, true faith receives and rests upon Christ, by virtue of this covenant of grace. I defy you either to fasten your faith or trust upon God or man without a word of promise to ground your faith upon. If I should bid you trust or believe your neighbour, or any responsible man for a sum of money that you stand in need of, you would ask me, Why, what ground have I to trust him? has he promised to give it or lend it to me? If he has not promised to do it, there is no ground of trust; and you would think that I were only mocking you, when I bid you trust him for it, unless he has passed his word. So, here, when we bid you believe in Christ, receive him, or rest upon him for salvation, your eye must immediately be turned to the word of grace, or promise, and his faithfulness engaged in it; for it is by virtue of that, that we receive him, or approve and apply him to our own souls: hence believing in Christ is expressed by a "taking hold of God's covenant," Is. lvi. 4; which expression plainly implies a fastening on the veracity or faithfulness of God pledged in the covenant. And how far the faithfulness of God is engaged in the covenant of grace, I showed in the doctrinal part of this discourse. He has subscribed it as a party, he has sealed it with his oath, and the blood of his Son; he has attested it

in the capacity of a witness; he has consented to the registration, yea, has actually registered his bond, that we might have the more speedy diligence upon it at a throne of grace. Now, I say, faith is a taking hold of God's faithfulness thus pledged in the covenant, it is a resting upon his veracity, it is a trusting to him that he will be as good as his word, because "it is impossible for God to lie;" it is a "setting to the seal that he is true," and a saying with David, "God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice." O sirs! faith in Christ, by virtue of his word of grace and promise, is one of the plainest and clearest things in the world, if the devil and an unbelieving jealous heart working together, did not darken and obscure the account we have of it in the word. What is plainer than to trust the word of an honest man, or to rest on him by virtue of his word? So here, believing is a resting on Christ, or a trusting in him, by virtue of his covenant or word of grace. But the legal proud heart of man has such a strong bent after salvation by doing or working for life, that nothing else than "the mighty power of God" can bring the sinner to quit and renounce all his works and "righteousness as filthy rags," and to take salvation and eternal life by trusting or believing the bare word of a promising God in Christ. But I shall not enlarge farther upon this at present.

3. The *third* thing proposed was, to inquire what are these blessings or privileges which lie within the circuit of this rainbow of the covenant, and of which the soul comes to be possessed, either in part or in whole, the moment that it takes hold of the covenant. The very naming of these blessings may serve as so many motives or arguments, to persuade you to take hold of the covenant, to come to a throne of grace, by virtue of the rainbow that surrounds it. And here a field of matter presents itself to view, so large and copious, that it is impossible for the heart of man to conceive it, far less can the tongue of man tell it, or express it in words; for all the blessings of heaven and eternity lie within the wide circuit of this rainbow of the covenant, which surrounds God's throne of grace. All grace whatsoever lay originally in the heart of God; but as it lies there, it is inaccessible by sinners, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord?" Well, because that grace that is in God's heart is inaccessible by us, therefore he brings it yet nearer to us, by taking a piece of our nature, uniting it to the person of his eternal Son, and calls it *Christ*, *Messiah*, *Immanuel*, *God-man*, or *God with us;* and makes "all the fulness of the Godhead," all the grace that is in his heart, to dwell there, that so we might not be afraid to come to one in our nature for grace and mercy to help us. But, that our faith might yet have a greater advantage, he does not rest

there; but he brings all the grace that is in Christ into a promise, or a covenant of grace, pledges his faithfulness in the strongest way imaginable in the promise or covenant, that so unbelief might have nothing to object. Unbelief might be ready to say, It is true, there is enough of grace in Christ, but, alas! he is in heaven, and he has carried all his grace to heaven with him; and the throne on which he now sits is so high, that I know not how to win at him. But, says the Lord, O sinner, say not so, think not so; for all the fulness of Christ is nigh thee in the rainbow of my covenant. I give thee a word of faith, a faithful word of promise, lean to that, rest on that, and Christ, and all that is in him, and all the grace that is in my heart, shall come along with it into thy soul. What is it, O sinner, thou wantest, which thou mayest not have either in title or possession, by resting on the veracity of him who has set his bow in the clouds?

I shall instance in a few of the many blessings, that are to be had by taking hold of God's covenant, or by believing in Christ by virtue of the covenant.

1*st*, Would you have JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be *thy God*, even *thy own God*, to be "the strength of thy heart, and thy portion for ever?" Well, come within the rainbow, by taking hold of God's covenant, or trusting in the word of a promising God in Christ, and it shall be so; for this is the leading article of the covenant; "I am the Lord thy God.—I will be their God.—I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." O sirs, you lost your claim to God by the first covenant; and while in a state of nature, under a covenant of works, you are without God in the world:" but here is a God in Christ coming back again in a new covenant, a covenant of grace and peace, O take him at his word, and take him in his word; for "faithful is he that hath promised." Let thy soul say to the Lord, upon the covenant ground and grant, "This God is my God for ever and ever; *and* he shall be *thy* God even unto death," because he has said it in his covenant. But, say you, must I not first close with Christ before I can claim the Lord as my God? I answer, To close with Christ is nothing else but to take a God in Christ as thy own God, by virtue of the covenant of grace and promise, in which his faithfulness is more deeply engaged than ever it was in God's covenant with Noah, of which the rainbow is a perpetual and standing sign. But O, say you, I am afraid it would be presumption for me to claim a God in Christ for my God, upon the covenant-grant, "I will be their God." I answer, So far is it from being presumption, that it is rebellion against the authority of the great God interposed in the very first command of the moral law, not to know and acknow-

ledge him, and trust in him as God, and as thy own God: and till thou take him as thy God in Christ, thou art living in open rebellion against the authority of Heaven: and wilt thou adventure to be a rebel against God, to avoid the danger of presumption, and so "rush upon the thick bosses" of Heaven's buckler? O that I could persuade you to obey the first command of the moral law, as it stands in a subserviency to the covenant of grace, contained in the preface to the ten commandments, which teaches us to believe that he is the Lord our God and Redeemer, upon the ground of his own faithfulness pledged in these words, "I am the Lord thy God." O sirs, if you can but find in your hearts, through grace, to obey the first command in the law, you will find it easy to obey the rest; and if you can but find in your hearts, through grace, to believe this first, and leading promise of the covenant of grace, "I am the Lord thy God," you will find it easy to lay claim by faith to all the subsequent promises of the covenant; for it would then be remembered, that the first promise of the covenant, and the first command of the moral law, are inseparably linked together.

2*dly*, Take hold of the covenant, and come within the arch of this blessed bow that goes round about the throne, and there thou shalt find a sealed pardon of sin, an indemnity, an act of oblivion for all thy sins, though they be innumerable as the stars, and great and heinous like the lofty mountains: Heb. viii. 12: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." So Jer. xxxi. 34: View him that sits upon the throne within the rainbow, and thou wilt hear him saying, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." O condemned sinner! trust a God in Christ for this, by virtue of his covenant, or by virtue of his promise; for "the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent."

3*dly*, Thou art by nature an alien, a stranger, a foreigner, a child of hell; wouldst thou fain come back again to God's family, and have a God in Christ as thy Father? Well, view the rainbow, come within the circuit of it, and there thou shalt have this: "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. But as many as received him," by virtue of this covenant-grant, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name," John i. 12.

4*thly*, Dost thou want a principle of spiritual life, who art by nature "dead in trespasses and sins?" Well, believe in the Son of God, by virtue of the covenant, and thou shalt have it; for, says Christ, (John xi. 25,) "He that believeth in me,

though he were dead, yet shall he live." Wouldst thou have thy spiritual life more abundant? new quickenings under the languishings of grace? Well, this is within the rainbow of the covenant: "Thy life is hid with Christ in God;" and he has said, that "thou shalt revive as the corn, and grow as the vine."

Again; dost thou want to have thy "heart sprinkled from an evil conscience?" Here it is to be had; Ezek. xxxvi. 25: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you."

Would you have the power of sin broken in thy soul? Take hold of God's covenant, or believe in Christ by virtue of the covenant, and thou shalt have this also: Mic. vii. 19: "I will subdue their iniquities." Rom. vi. 14: "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

Wouldst thou have thy "stony heart" softened, and turned into "a heart of flesh?" "This also lies within the rainbow of the covenant: Ezek. xxxvi. 26: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh."

Would you have the Spirit of God within you, as a "Spirit of wisdom and revelation," as a quickening, guiding, and sanctifying Spirit? Well, this is within the covenant also: Ezek. xxxvi. 27: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

Would you have protection against all enemies and dangers? This, also, is to be had within the circuit of this rainbow. The *man* Christ, who sits upon the throne, "is a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest."

Wouldst thou have strength to encounter thy enemy, strength to grapple with difficulties, and to manage thy work and warfare? This is within the rainbow of the covenant: Zech. x. 12: "And I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord." Is. xli. 10: "I will strengthen them, yea, I will help them, yea, I will uphold them with the right hand of my righteousness."

Lastly, Would you have grace to keep in the Lord's way to the end, till the good work be perfected? Well, this is in the covenant: "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger. He which hath begun the good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." All these, and innumerable other

blessings, lie within the circuit of this rainbow, which goes round about the throne of grace.

4. The *fourth* thing proposed was, to inquire who are they that may warrantably come within the compass of this rainbow? who are they that may take hold of God's covenant? An answer to this question is the more necessary, as it is one of the main engines by which the devil keeps sinners under the power of unbelief, to tell them that God's covenant and promise belong to others, and not to them. Will the poor sinner be ready to say, Indeed if I were a believer, I might confidently come within this rainbow, and intermeddle with Christ, and the blessings of his covenant; but till then I must not presume to meddle. And thus, I say, sinners are many times discouraged from coming to Christ to take hold of his covenant. But, sirs, allow me to tell you, that none are excluded from coming within this rainbow, or from coming to Christ who sits on the throne of grace, by virtue of this covenant of grace, but only they who exclude themselves by their unbelief. Every one hath liberty to look to the natural rainbow, and improve the faithfulness of God in his promise as a security against the universal deluge; so every soul that hears the gospel, is allowed to look to the rainbow of the covenant of grace, and improve it as a security, through the satisfaction of Christ, against the deluge of divine wrath due to him for sin.

Quest. What is it that may warrant and encourage a lost sinner by faith to lay hold of the faithfulness of God, engaged in this rainbow of the covenant that is about his throne?

Answ. 1. God commands you to lay hold on his covenant: 1 John iii. 23: "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Now, when God bids you believe in Christ, he bids you believe in him, by virtue of the covenant of grace, or by virtue of the free promise of life through Christ to perishing sinners. O essay it in the strength of him that commands you. The very first command, as I was saying, warrants you, yea, obliges you to have a God in Christ, and none other, as your God. Now, this command is to all and every one; and if it were not so, it would needs follow, that there are some in whom unbelief were no sin; for where there is no law, there can be no transgression: but depend upon it, sirs, that unbelief is your sin, and the great sin upon which the sentence of condemnation will run against you at the great day; and if unbelief be your sin, then it is your indispensable duty, by the command of God, to believe in Christ or to trust in him for salvation, by virtue of his faithfulness engaged in the bow of the covenant that is about the throne of grace.

2*dly*, Let the extent of the rainbow encourage and warrant you to come within it. The natural rainbow reaches from one end of the heaven to the other: but, O sirs, the grace of God in a covenant of grace is much wider and larger, for it reaches forth its arms to clasp every creature in its bosom, Mark xvi. 15, 16. The voice of a God of grace is to *men*, and the *sons of men*, to take hold of his covenant, to improve his faithfulness in the rainbow against this the deluge of his wrath: Is. lv. 1, 2: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; let him come. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

3*dly*, The rainbow of the covenant is pointed towards you in particular; and if you will but look to it, you will see the end of it coming close to your very hand: Acts ii. 39: "The promise is unto you, and to your seed, and to all that are afar off.—To you is the word of this salvation." Art thou a sinner, far away, like the prodigal? Well, see the rainbow about the throne pointing to you: Is. lvii. 19: "I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off." So Acts ii. 39. Art thou a polluted sinner, black like the Ethiopian, spotted like the leopard? Well, see the rainbow of the covenant pointing out its grace to you: Psal. lxviii. 13: "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." Art thou sinking under the load of sin, as a burden heavier than thou canst bear? Well, see the bow of the covenant reaching grace and mercy to help thee. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." In a word, whatever be thy condition, if on this side of hell, thou wilt find still the bow of God's covenant stretching out its hand to thee and accommodating itself to thy condition and circumstance. Although the arch of the bow be high, yet it stoops down to every man; though the throne be *high and lifted up*, and he that sits on it be *exalted*, yet the bow that is about his throne bows itself down to thy very hand, that thou may climb up to Christ by it in a way of believing: and therefore "say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring Christ down from above? or, Who shall descend into the deep, to bring up Christ again from the dead? for the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach," Rom. x. 6—8.

4*thly*, It is most pleasing to him that sits on the throne of grace to see a lost sinner come within the circuit of his rainbow for safety. You cannot do a thing that is so pleasing to God, as to believe in Christ, by virtue of the covenant. John vi. 29: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him

whom he hath sent." He speaks as if this were the only work; and indeed it is so much the only work of a sinner, that without it, it is impossible to please him; and with it every thing you do is pleasing, your persons and your sacrifices are accepted upon his altar. O sirs, will you not do a thing that is so pleasing to him that made you, him that preserves you, him that provides for you, him that shed the blood of his heart to redeem you? Never was the overflowing breast of a tender-hearted mother more glad to be sucked, than the Lord is to see a sinner come within the bow of his covenant, for grace and mercy to help in time of need.

5thly, The nature of the throne, and the nature of the rainbow, invites and encourages your faith and trust. The throne is of the nature with the rainbow, the throne is a throne of grace, and the covenant a covenant of grace. What sort of a throne is a throne of grace? It is a throne for beggars, debtors, and bankrupts, to come to, that they may get whatsoever they want freely; it is a throne that stands by outgiving, by giving liberally to all *without upbraiding*. What sort of a covenant is a covenant of grace? The very name of it tells you what is its nature; a covenant of grace can be nothing else but an absolute free grant of all the riches of grace that lie about the throne of grace. If any thing were required of us as a condition of our taking or receiving the blessings of the covenant, it would that moment cease to be a covenant of grace. But, say you, is not faith the condition of the covenant? *Answ.* I will be loath to condemn that way of speaking, because worthy men have used it, and do use it in a sound sense. But, sirs, I would have you to remember, that when it is called a condition, all that such worthy learned men mean by it, is only this; that you can have no saving benefit or advantage by Christ, unless he be received; you can have no benefit by God's covenant or promise, unless you believe the promise to be true, and believe it with application to your own souls. Faith is just such a condition as shows the inseparable connexion between one thing and another. As if you should say to a beggar, 'There is your alms, on the condition that you take it: 'There is meat, on the condition you eat it;' 'There is a good bond for a sum of money, on condition that you trust him that granted it.' Or, as if I should say to one, thou shalt have the benefit of the light of the sun, on condition thou open thine eyes to see it; or, The ground will bear you, on condition you lay your weight upon it. Such a condition of the covenant of grace is faith; it is just taking what is freely given "without money and price:" and let it be remembered, that itself is one of the blessings promised in this covenant. Now, I say, let the

nature of the throne, and the nature of the rainbow of the covenant, encourage and warrant you to come and trust in a God of grace. I make but a supposition, that a great and rich king should erect a throne in the open field, and emit a proclamation for all beggars, bankrupts, and people in wants and straits, to come to his throne, and they should get whatever they needed. O what a gathering would there be! With what confidence would needy people flock thither, and ask what they wanted, especially if the king had sworn by his life that they should be served? Well, this is the very case: the throne of grace is only a throne for the needy, for "The rich are sent empty away:" and the bow about the throne is just the faithfulness of God engaged in a free promise, that come to him who will, "he will in no wise cast them out." O then take the advantage, and trust his promise, and you have the thing promised, for his promise is as good as payment.

6*thly*, Will you but take a view of the name of him that sits upon the throne within the rainbow, and let that encourage your faith, hope, and expectation. O sirs, "they that know his name will put their trust in him;" his name that sits on the throne is a *strong tower*, to which the sinner *may flee*, and to which the saints "do flee and are safe." See what his name is, Exod. xxxiv. 6, his name is, "The Lord, the Lord God, JEHOVAH EL, the strong God, able to do *for thee* exceeding abundantly above what *thou* canst ask or think." He stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and does whatever pleases him in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and therefore is able to do for thee whatever thou askest of him, yea, more than thou canst ask. Abraham by faith stayed himself upon the power of a promising God without staggering, Rom. iv. 20, 21. Again; his name is *merciful:* and therefore may thou say, Will he not answer his name, and extend mercy, considering that misery is the only proper object of mercy, and I am wretched, miserable, poor and blind, and naked? David's faith found footing in this name of a God in Christ, when he could not stand before the bar of the law, Psal. cxxx. 4: "But there is mercy with thee; that thou mayst be feared." Again; his name who sits upon the throne within the rainbow is *gracious;* and it is the very nature of grace, as I said, to give, and to give freely. Grace is that attribute of the divine nature which shall be celebrated through eternity; this world is but a theatre on which he designs the manifestations of his grace. May not this encourage thee to go within the circuit of the rainbow, and ask grace and mercy to help thee in time of need? Unbelief, indeed, will

tell thee, that "the Lord has forgotten to be gracious;" but it is not so, for he cannot forget his own name. Unbelief will tell thee, that thou art unworthy of his grace, and this will hinder thee from coming successfully; but that cannot be, either, for grace is most grace when it is extended to the most unworthy. Thus, I say, draw encouragement from the name of him that sits upon the throne within the rainbow.

7thly, It is for the honour and glory of God, that you improve the rainbow of the covenant, for your security against the deluge of wrath, and for obtaining the blessings that lie within the bosom of it. Hereby ye glorify his power, being persuaded that he is able to make good what he has promised; hereby you glorify his holiness, which is pawned to the great covenant-head, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, pledged in the covenant to him and his seed; hereby you glorify his justice, by acquiescing in that righteousness or justice which is the foundation of his throne; hereby you glorify his mercy, and join with him in saying, "Mercy shall be built up for ever," hereby you glorify his truth and faithfulness, by "setting to the seal that God is true:" in a word, you give him the glory of your salvation, saying, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever;" the language of faith is, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory."

Thus you see that there is noble encouragement, and the best warrants in the world, for believing or coming within this bow of the covenant. O then, sirs, for the Lord's sake, and for your own souls' sake, flee within the rainbow that is about the throne; believe in Christ by virtue of the covenant of grace and promise. And if after all you will not comply, I declare in the name of God, that the bow of God's covenant shall stand you in no stead. The faithfulness of God, that is engaged to save the sinner that believes, or takes hold of his covenant, is engaged to damn the soul that continues in unbelief; for, as "he that believeth, shall be saved; *so* he that believeth not shall be damned." The fountains of the great deep of God's wrath will inevitably sweep you away; and he who is the God of salvation has said, that he will "wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of them that go on still in their trespasses."

5. The *fifth* thing proposed was, to roll away some impediments, or stumbling-stones, that lie in the way of sinners, and which have a fatal influence in discouraging them to take the benefit of the rainbow of the covenant, which surrounds the throne of grace. There are some things on God's part, that appear as great and strong bars against the sinner,

and tend mightily to discourage him from looking either to the throne, or the bow that surrounds it; namely, the law of God, the justice of God, the holiness of God, and the decree of God.

1*st*, The law of God. O, says the sinner, I am condemned already by God's law and how then shall I look towards God's covenant, or take hold of it for my safety against the deluge of wrath? *Answ.* If thou hadst not broken the divine law, thou wouldst not stand in need of the grace of God's covenant. The law is so far from being against the promise in the business of salvation, that that moment thou takest hold of Christ by virtue of the covenant or promise, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in thee; "for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. *Christ was* made under the law to redeem them that were under the law."

2*dly*, But O, says the sinner, the justice of God is against me, the thoughts of incensed justice make my heart to tremble within me. *Answ.* The throne of grace, that is surrounded with the bow of the covenant, is founded upon justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Surety; and that moment thou comest within the bow of the covenant, justice becomes thy friend, assoilzing thee on the ground of Christ's satisfaction: for "God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to show forth his righteousness for the remission of sins; that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

3*dly*, The holiness of God sometimes scares the sinner from looking toward the throne of grace, or covenant of grace.—But, sirs, I tell you, that that moment you come within the bow of the covenant, you are "made partakers of his holiness;" and the holiness of God being laid in pawn for the outmaking of the promise, stands up for its own interest in the sinner's behalf. And, beside, by the blood of Jesus, the filth of sin is covered from the eyes of unspotted holiness, as well as the guilt of it hid from the eye of incensed justice.

4*thly*, The sinner is ready to be scared from taking hold of God's covenant, and his faithfulness engaged in it, on account of the decrees of God. O, will the sinner say, it is true, if I were among the number of the elect, I might meddle with God's covenant; but, alas! I think I am none of these, and therefore I need not think of taking hold of Christ by virtue of his covenant. But, sirs, let me tell you, that "secret things belong unto the Lord, but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children." Let God's decrees alone; you have no more business with them in the matter of believing, than you have to trouble yourself with what they

are doing in Mexico or Peru. Meddle you with the things that are revealed, for these are the things that *belong to us, and to our children.* Now, what are the things that are revealed? Christ is revealed, the covenant and the promises are revealed as the ground of faith, the command of God enjoining you to believe is revealed, God's good will to man upon earth is revealed: these are the things that belong to you, and therefore meddle you with these. And let not the devil and your own ill heart together perplex and confound you, by telling you, that you do not know if you be elected; for that moment you come within the bow of God's covenant, you may know your election, and that "God hath loved you with an everlasting love;" and no other way can you possibly know it. But, besides all this, let me tell you, that God's promise, registered in his word, is but an extract of the eternal thought and purpose of his heart; so that by believing his promise, immediately you may know that you are "the called according to his purpose."

But, may the sinner say, that though there be no bar on God's part, yet there are many bars and impediments on my part. I shall endeavour to roll away these also, by answering the following objections of unbelief:—

Object. 1. I am a poor unworthy creature, I dare not think of meddling with God's covenant. *Answ.* It is a bastard devilish humility, that keeps you from believing; for the more unworthy you are of the grace and favour of God, the more fit you are for receiving the grace of God at a throne of grace, by virtue of the covenant of grace. Grace is only calculated for the unworthy sinner, and not for those that think themselves worthy of it.

Object. 2. My sins are like the great mountains, and I fear the grace of God will never level them. *Answ.* Take hold of God's covenant, and you shall find these mountains removed, and cast into the midst of the sea: Is. i. 18: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Object. 3. I want a law-work, I am not weary and heavy laden, and therefore am not fit to take hold of God's covenant. *Answ.* If thou think to make a law-work and humiliation a price in your hand to recommend you to Christ, and fit you for him; I tell you that instead of fitting yourself for Christ, you are building up a wall between Christ and you, that you shall never win over. If you see an absolute need of Christ, and that you are undone without him, do not stand to seek more law-work; for that moment you close with Christ, by virtue of the covenant of grace, the law has gotten its end,

Christ being "the end of the law to every one that believeth." It is the weary and heavy laden that are called; but that is not to exclude others, who cannot find that disposition in themselves; and they are mentioned in particular in the call, because they are most ready to exclude themselves from having any concern in Christ or his covenant.

Object. 4. I am afraid to take hold of God's covenant in case I turn away from his commandments, and so render myself unworthy of a covenant relation to him. *Answ.* If you really take hold of his covenant, the grace of his covenant will keep you in the way of his commandments: Jer. xxxii. 40: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good: but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."

Object. 5. I am afraid to take hold of God's covenant in case that I never be able to bear the cross: I will faint in the day of adversity, for my strength is small. *Answ.* Do not fear that, for he that sits on the throne has said in his covenant, "when thou passest through the waters, he will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." His presence shall go with thee to the hottest furnace, and unto the deep waters of Mara: and if so, there is no fear: but thy head shall be carried above.

Object. 6. I have formerly tried to take hold of God's covenant; but I have played the harlot with many lovers since that. *Answ.* Renew thy gripes of the covenant; for the grace of God's covenant, the rainbow about the throne, is still pointing thee out as it were by name: Jer. iii. 1: "Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord."

Object. 7. But I have acted as a rebel against Heaven, I have been waging war against God, and will ever he allow me to meddle with his covenant, or come within the verge of this rainbow? For answer, see Psal. lxviii. 18, where we are told concerning him that sits upon the throne of grace within the rainbow, "He received gifts for men; yea, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among us." See also, Is. lv. 7: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Object. 8. I want power to take hold of the covenant, I want power to believe in Christ by virtue of the covenant. *Answ.* He that sits upon the throne, with the rainbow about it, he is

saying, "I will give power to the faint, and increase strength to them that have no might;" yea, he has said that he will "make thee willing in the day of his power:" and if he has given thee the will to believe, there is no fear for the want of power; for he that works the will by his covenant, has engaged to work the do also; he "works in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Object. 9. You are ever speaking of the bow of the covenant, but I would fain see it; I have seen the natural bow, but the rainbow of the covenant is invisible. *Answ.* It is strange not to see it, when you have it in your hand; the Old and New Testament is the rainbow that I am speaking of; the rainbow is at this moment shining upon you in a preached gospel. O remember that awful word, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

Object. 10. I am afraid I am one of those from whom this rainbow is hid, and so am lost for ever. *Answ.* If thou dost not see it, I ask, Art thou longing to see it? If so, I can tell you, for good news, thou shalt see it ere long; "for he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness;" and then he that sits on the throne has said, that he will "open the blind eyes, and turn thee from darkness, *that* thou shalt behold the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."

Thus I have endeavoured to roll away all the impediments I can think of, that you may be encouraged to come within the bow that is about the throne of grace. What are you resolved to do? Will you come within the bow of God's covenant or not? I would fain expostulate the matter with you. What will you do in the day of death, if you come not within this rainbow? What will you do in the day of reckoning, when standing before the bar of God? Whither will you flee, when rocks and mountains refuse to fall upon you, to hide you from the face of the Lamb? O sirs, there is no shunning the deluge of divine wrath, but by taking hold of the covenant, and of the faithfulness of God engaged in it; the whole creation cannot help you, if you do it not, but you must lie under the fiery mountains of God's wrath for ever; for "he that believeth not is condemned already; and the wrath of God abideth on him."

But I cannot think of parting with you upon mount Ebal or Sinai. And therefore let me beseech you, by the mercy of God, by all the blessings of his covenant, by the blood and bowels of a God of love in Christ, by all the glory of heaven

and eternity, that you come within the compass of the rainbow that is about the throne. O, say you, with my whole soul I would take hold of God's covenant, and his faithfulness engaged in it; but will you give us your advice as to this matter. An answer to this leads to,—

6. The *last* thing proposed, which was, to offer a few advices in order to your improving the rainbow of the promise, or covenant, for your safety against the deluge of wrath.

1*st*, Study to be firmly persuaded of your misery and lost state without Christ, and while without the confines of the bow that surrounds his throne. Till you see your lost state by the breach of the covenant of works, you will never take hold of a covenant of grace; and therefore be firmly persuaded, that by nature you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. But now if you have come to this persuasion, you must not rest content here, for many have perished in this place of breaking forth of children. And therefore,

2*dly*, Be firmly persuaded, that there is relief for you in Christ, and in the new covenant, of which he is the glorious Head. However bad thy condition is, there is relief for thee in Christ; for he is *all in all*. Is thy state a state of sin? Well, Christ is the Saviour of none but sinners. Is thy state a state of distance from God? Well, he came to bring us near by his own blood. Is thy state a state of enmity and war against Heaven? Well, his work is to reconcile God and man, to satisfy justice, and to slay the enmity of the heart; he breaks down the wall of partition, and brings both parties unto one. Is thy state a hopeless state? Well, he is the hope of all the ends of the earth. Is it a state of darkness? He is the light of the world. Art thou in an impotent state? He is the strength of the poor, and of the needy. Art thou in a state of bondage? He proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Art thou cursed? He came to redeem thee from the curse. Art thou dead in sin, dead by the law? Well, he died that we might live; and though thou be dead, yet thou shalt live, if you believe in him. So that, I say, there is that in Christ which meets with the condition of the sinner, let his case be ever so bad, if he be on this side of hell. Now, I say, be persuaded of all this, be assured of it, that there is help laid upon this mighty Redeemer, and that he is indeed "able to save to the very uttermost."

3*dly*, Be persuaded that the rainbow, that is surrounding the throne of grace, is pointing to you; I mean, that the covenant of grace, or promise of help, relief, and rest, through Christ, is left to you, and directed or endorsed to you in particular, and that it belongs to you, as a thing you may claim

without any vicious intromission. This is absolutely necessary, for I can never trust to a security, which mean time I think or imagine is granted to another man, and not to myself. Can I prosecute upon a bond granted in another man's name, and not in my own? O, say you, if I thought I had a right to the covenant, or promise of God in Christ, I would believe it, and rejoice. Well, to establish you in the faith of this, know, O sinner, for thy encouragement. (1) The covenant and promise is endorsed or directed to thee, as if thou wert named by name and surname. Like a letter, when it is backed to a man; when he reads the back of the letter, and finds it directed to him, he breaks the seal of it, and claims all that is in it, though it were a security for millions of gold and silver. (2.) Thou hast already got the seal of the covenant in baptism; and would God allow the seal of his covenant, and yet wilt thou say thou hast no claim to intermeddle with the covenant itself? (3.) God has put his covenant, his confirmed testament, in thy hand as a charter for eternal life, and commanded thee to read it, search it, trust to it for a happy eternity; and yet wilt thou say thou hast no claim to the covenant, no right to take hold of it? And therefore, I say, be persuaded that you have a good claim to the covenant of grace and promise: "the promise is to you, and to your seed." You may readily say to me, that by this means God's promise is made to the reprobate, as well as to the elect, in the visible church. I answer with the learned and pious Rutherford, that the reprobate have as good a revealed warrant for believing as the elect have. If God's covenant and promise were not to all in common within the visible church, and if his faithfulness were not engaged in the promise tendered to them, how is it possible that unbelievers could be said to "make God a liar," by not believing his promise, or the record, in which he has given to us eternal life, in his Son Jesus Christ? You may again object and say, If God's promises were made to the reprobate, then it would follow, that his faithfulness would fail, if he did not fulfil his promise to them. I answer, We are to distinguish between the promise in the exhibition of it in the word, and in the effectual application of it by the Spirit. In the first of these respects it is made to all, without exception of elect, or reprobate; and that the promise is not made effectual to the reprobate will no more infer the want of faithfulness in God, than a man's not marrying of a woman after he has passed his promise to her, when yet she refuses to consent to the bargain.

4*thly*, Be persuaded, that this covenant of grace and promise is a good and noble security, and that it is able to bear thy weight. You heard in the doctrinal part, how much

the faithfulness of God is engaged in the covenant. Pray do not forget it; he has subscribed it, attested it, sealed it, registered it; in a word, he has given all imaginable advantage for believing, and takes off all imaginable pleas for unbelief.

5thly, Be much in viewing those great and glorious blessings that lie within the covenant, within the verge of the bow that is about the throne: of which I gave you an account upon the third head proposed, in prosecuting of this exhortation. What thinkest thou of having JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for thy God and portion for ever? What thinkest thou of a sealed pardon, and indemnity for all thy sins? What thinkest thou of being "an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ?" What thinkest thou of the "inheritance, that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and which fadeth not away?" Yet all these lie within the circle of the bow of the covenant. Now, I say, keep your eye upon these, that you may be encouraged, or stirred up to press towards the actual possession of these glorious blessings, by coming within this blessed bow.

6thly, Take a view of all these great and glorious blessings, as lying in the hand of him that sits upon the throne, ready to be given out to every one that believes in him by virtue of the covenant. O hear him that sits on the throne crying to all sinners, to a whole perishing world, "Whosoever believeth in me, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely." Thus, I say, be persuaded, that all the blessings of the covenant lie ready in his hand to be distributed and communicated to every one that comes to him.

7thly. Being firmly persuaded of all these things, study to rest, and lay the weight of thy sinking soul upon the veracity and faithfulness of a promising God in Christ. You know what it is to lay weight upon an honest man's word, who you are persuaded will not fail you; so lay weight and stress upon the promise of God, upon his faithfulness engaged in the covenant, being fully persuaded, that what he has promised, he is both able and willing to perform. O sirs, trust in him, let his truth be your shield and buckler, for he is *truth* itself, *faithfulness* is *the girdle of his loins*; hang by his girdle, and say with David, "In his word will I hope. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." And if thou do so, thou shalt not be disappointed: "The fashion of this world passeth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

8thly, If you have thus entered within the bow of the covenant, go forward to the throne and him that sits on it,

whose appearance is like a jasper and sardine stone for brightness and glory; pursue him at his own throne; plead the actual out-making and accomplishing of his promise, for this is God's stated and ordinary way appointed in his word: Ezek. xxxvi. 37, compared with ver. 25—27: there God makes a great many promises, and after all he adds, "For these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel, that I may do it for them. Only when you come to the throne, and plead the promise, take care that you do not expect the accomplishment of the promise for your own pleading; but upon the account of his own faithfulness engaged in his own covenant of grace. But, may you say, I have neither skill nor confidence to plead the promise. I answer, It is very true, you have no skill to manage at his throne; and therefore I give you—

A *9th* advice: Put the promise of the covenant, of which you seek the accomplishment, in the hand of your advocate, that he may plead it for you: "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And therefore in your approaches to the throne, beware of neglecting him; for "he hath made us accepted in the beloved:" owing to his skill and his interests in the court. He has his Father's ear, and his Father's commission to make "intercession for the transgressors." The Father says to him, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." So that however great your suits at a throne of grace are, you have no reason to fear, if you employ this glorious advocate and daysman: and in doing so, do not doubt of success; "but ask in faith, nothing wavering:—draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith."

10*thly*, When you have done all this, you must wait for the accomplishment and out-making of the promise in a sensible way; for "he that believeth, *does* not make haste.—I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." Do not limit the Lord to your time: but wait his time: "For the Lord is a God of judgment, and he waits to be gracious; and therefore blessed are all they that wait for him." Sirs, if you have but the promise of a man, or the bond of a man, for a sum of money, you will wait many years before you get payment, and yet you will not doubt of payment at the end, when the time comes; and will you trust and wait on men, and will you not wait on your God continually? O "the Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry." See to this purpose, Heb. x. 36, 37:

"Ye have need of patience; that after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

Having thus taken hold of God's covenant, and entered within the rainbow that is about the throne, come to-morrow and get the seal of the covenant, for the confirmation of your faith, that so you may with the greatest freedom intermeddle with the goods contained in your Elder Brother's testament. Although a man have a good right to an estate, yet perhaps he may be loath to intermeddle till he get enfeoffment. Well, sirs, having taken hold of the good charter, the covenant of grace, I invite you to come and get enfeoffment upon the charter to-morrow at God's table, where he invites all his friends to eat and drink abundantly of the bread and wine that he has mingled.

I shall conclude the whole of this discourse, by offering a few marks by which you may try whether or not you have really got within the bow of the covenant which surrounds the throne. It is true, indeed, all the members of the visible church, bear a relation to the covenant, "to them belong the adoption and the covenants, and the promises;" you are externally in covenant by virtue of baptism, you are professedly covenanted people. But the question is, Are you really within the covenant? have you by faith entered within the rainbow that surrounds the throne? The marks that I offer shall be principally founded upon the context in this chapter.

1. Then, The Spirit of the great Covenant head that sits upon the throne has entered into you, if you have entered within the bow of this covenant, or seen the glory of him that sits on the throne. We find here John was first *in the spirit*, and then he saw the throne and the rainbow, and him that sat on it. O sirs, I am persuaded that there was never one brought within the bow of God's covenant, but will be ready to own that it was he that brought them. "I will cause them to pass under the rod, and I will bring them into the bond of the covenant." The apostle Paul tells us, Phil. iii. 12, that he was apprehended of Christ Jesus, before ever he apprehended him; so will it be with you, if you be brought within the rainbow of God's covenant.

2. You will be much in admiring the throne, and the glory of him that sits on it, who is here compared to a *jasper* and *sardine stone*. I told you in the explication of the words, that this is Christ. O have you seen the glory of an exalted Christ? "All we with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." If you have "seen his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," you will be ready to say, "He is indeed white and ruddy, fairer than the children of men."

3. If so, then you will take great pleasure in beholding the rainbow that is about the throne, and rejoice in it as your security against the deluge of wrath, saying, with David, "This is all my salvation, *that* he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure:" you will be delighted to think on the freedom of the covenant, the order of the covenant, the sureness of the covenant; and its emerald colour, its perpetual greenness without any variation.

4. When you look to the rainbow of the covenant, it will fill you with expectation of good when you go to the throne in prayer. The natural rainbow, as I said, is the forerunner of a shower to the thirsty earth; people expect it when they see the bow in the clouds: so when you see the bow of the covenant, it will give you good hopes of a shower of the Spirit's influences, and that he will come to you "as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." And truly, sirs, one great reason why there are so many hopeless prayers among us, is because we do not set the eye of faith on the rainbow of the covenant.

5. If ever you was brought within the rainbow of the covenant, you have been stripped of your own "filthy rags," and clothed with the white raiment of the righteousness of the Son of God; for they that are about the throne here are said to be "clothed in white raiment," ver. 4. So then, I ask, Have you been made to see all your own righteousness to be "as filthy rags, as a menstruous cloth, *as* loss and dung, that you may be found in Christ, not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ?" Is the language of thy heart, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness: in him *will I* be justified, and in him *alone will I* glory?"

6. If you have been within the rainbow, brought within the bow of the covenant, you have had your heart and eyes enlightened, and warmed with the seven lamps of fire before the throne, which are explained to be the Spirit with his various influences, ver. 5. These are compared to lamps, because of their enlightening efficacy; and *lamps of fire*, because of their sanctifying, purifying, warming efficacy, on the soul. Now, try yourselves by this; if you be brought within the bow of the covenant that is about the throne, the Spirit has been in you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, discovering the things of God to you in a divine lustre; and, like fire, they have purified you in some measure from the dross of sin, and made your heart to burn within you, like the disciples going to Emmaus; and, like a lamp, they serve to direct you in the way of truth and holiness; the voice of the Spirit is, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

7. If you be brought within the rainbow of the covenant, you will be frequently bathing your polluted souls in "the sea of glass, that is before the throne," spoken of in the 6th verse. Interpreters think that there is an allusion here to the large vessels in the temple and tabernacle, in which the priests used to wash themselves before they offered sacrifices, called "a sea of glass," because of the transparent purity of him whose blood it was. They that are come to Jesus by faith, the Mediator of the new covenant, they are also come to "the blood of sprinkling," in order to the cleansing of their souls from sin and from uncleanness. You will see a continual need of this blood to purify your persons and actions from every thing that defiles.

8. If brought within the rainbow of the covenant, you will be much taken up in celebrating the praises of God's holiness, and adoring him upon this account; they that are about the throne, ver. 8, cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Now, try yourselves by this. Can you love God, adore, and celebrate his praises, because of his unspotted holiness and purity, which cannot behold iniquity without abhorrence? This I take to be one of the sweetest and surest marks of a true believer and saint which distinguishes him from all hypocrites in the world. A hypocrite may come the length to love and adore the divine Majesty, because of his greatness, because of his goodness, because of his mercy; but I do not think that they can love and praise him, because of his holiness, and hatred of sin. No, this argues a seraphic and angelic spirit, for the angels cover their faces, crying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts," Is. vi. Now, is this the disposition of thy soul? Canst thou say with David, Psal. xxx. 4, "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness?" and Is. xii. at the close, "Shout, O daughter of Zion; for great is the holy One of Israel in the midst of thee!"

9. You will equally adore, worship, and admire all the three persons of the ever-blessed Trinity as one God. So do they that are about the throne: they cry, Holy Father, holy Son, and Holy Spirit: and these are but one Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. Faith takes up God according to the revelation that he has made of himself, considered personally or essentially, and it cannot endure any thing that derogates from the glory of any of the blessed three in one and one in three. You that are not stricken with horror at the blasphemy that is uttered against the Son of God this day in our church, as if he were only a subordinate deity, inferior to the Father, you were never yet within the compass of the rainbow that goes about the throne on which he sits; for they that have been there, they have

seen him to be the same in substance, equal in power, and glory with his eternal Father, to be the Lord God almighty, as well as the Father, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." And the concerns of his glory will go nearer your heart than any private concerns of your own, though your honour were laid in the dust.

10. *Lastly*, If ever you have been within the rainbow of the covenant that surrounds the throne, then I am sure you will be much concerned to have the crown pulled off the head of self, and set upon the head of him that sits upon the throne of grace: ver. 10, 11, they that are about the throne, "cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power." O sirs, if ever you were brought within the rainbow of the covenant of grace, you will not "sacrifice to your own net, or burn incense to your own drag;" you will not attribute any or the least part of your salvation to yourselves, to your own holiness, goodness, diligence, frame, or any thing else: no, no, you will tread every thing under your feet, that dares to usurp the room of Christ, and be ready to say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory." O he is the Lord my righteousness, he is the glory of my strength, in his righteousness will I be exalted, and I resolve to stand an eternal debtor to grace, grace reigning through imputed righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ my Lord. Worthy, worthy is he to wear the crown, to sit on the throne, and to sway the sceptre for ever. O let King Jesus arise, and let his enemies be scattered, and flee before him.

SERMON XVI.

THE TREE OF LIFE SHAKING HIS FRUITS AND LEAVES AMONG THE NATIONS.*

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.—REV. XXII. 2.

THE FIRST SERMON ON THIS TEXT.

I HAD occasion to discourse on the verse immediately preceding, at a solemnity in the neighbourhood, about a year ago; at which time I endeavoured to make it evident, that

* Three discourses, preached at the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, July 12, 13, 14, 1729.

this vision of the apostle John has an immediate respect to the church militant, whatever farther accomplishment it may have in the church triumphant in glory. By the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb," we are to understand that great abundance of grace, that issues forth in a gospel dispensation towards perishing sinners, from a God of grace "reconciling the world to himself" in Christ, as is clear to any who shall compare the 1st and 17th verse of this chapter together; they having a close and inseparable connexion. In the 1st verse, the river of water of life issues forth; and in the 17th verse, there is a universal call and invitation given to all perishing sinners to come and drink of it: "Whosoever will, let him come, and drink of the water of life freely." Now, if the invitation, ver. 17, be to the church militant, to come and drink of the water of life, as no doubt it is, then surely that river of water of life, of which they are called to drink, must flow in the church militant also.

This being established, it must needs follow, that the words I have now read in the 2d verse, must have a respect to the church militant also; especially if we consider the last clause of the verse, where the leaves of the tree are said to be *for the healing of the nations.* Now, in heaven there are not nations in the plural number, but only one heavenly nation of the first-born, and that nation does not need any healing; the inhabitants of that land of glory do not say we are sick, being presented without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; and therefore it must be for the healing of the diseased nations of this lower world that this tree of life is designed.

Now, this premised, I take up the words as a metaphorical description of Christ, the Saviour of lost sinners, under the notion of a *tree.* Where notice, (1.) The nature of this tree; he is *the tree of life.* (2.) The commodious situation of the tree for the convenience of the city of God, the visible church upon earth; this tree of life is *in the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river.* (3.) The fertility of this tree of life; it *bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields fruit every month.* (4.) The medicinal quality of the tree; *the* very *leaves of* it *are for the healing of the nations.* The explication of these particulars I defer till I come to the prosecution of the following doctrine, which I observe from them.

Doct. "That the Lord Jesus Christ is the fertile and medicinal tree, planted by his Father in the city of the New Testament church, for the benefit of the starving and diseased nations of the earth." The foundation of the doctrine is obvious, from the general view that I have already given you of the words, *In the midst of the street of it,* namely, of the new

Jerusalem, that comes down out of heaven, which is the New Testament church, *and on each side of the river was there the tree of life*, &c.

Now, in prosecuting this doctrine, I shall just observe the order already pointed at in the division of the words; and, through divine assistance, I shall,

I. Speak a little of this tree of life.

II. Speak of the situation of this tree in the city of God; it is said to be *in the midst of the street, and on each side of the river.*

III. Of the fertility of this tree; it *bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields fruit every month.*

IV. Of the medicinal quality of the tree, and how its leaves are *for the healing of the nations.*

V. Apply the whole; or, if time do not allow, apply each of the particulars as I go along them.

I. The *first* thing is, to *speak a little of Christ, under the notion of the tree of life.* And here I shall, 1. Offer some remarks concerning this blessed tree. 2. Show why it is called *the tree of life.* 3. What that life is that springs out of this tree. 4. The excellent qualities of that life that comes from this tree to those who by faith eat of his fruit.

First, I would offer some general remarks concerning this blessed tree here spoken of.

1. Then, I remark, that such metaphorical descriptions of Christ are very common and familiar to the Spirit of God in scripture. Sometimes he is called "a plant," and "a plant of renown," by the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxxiv. 29. Sometimes he is called "a rod, and a branch springing out of the root of Jesse," Is. xi. 1. Sometimes "a root springing out of a dry ground," Is. liii. 2. Sometimes "a tree," Hos. xiv. 8: "I am like a green fir tree; from me is thy fruit found." Sometimes under the notion of an apple tree, Cant. ii. 3: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons." So here, in my text, he is held out under the notion of a "tree," and "the tree of life." Our blessed Lord, while here upon earth, was a parabolical kind of preacher, that is to say, he represented heavenly things by familiar similitudes; and he continues the same strain of teaching, even after he is exalted to glory; he is so fond of making himself known to the children of men, that he is content to compare himself to any thing that may convey the knowledge of himself and of his grace to us.

2. I would have you to remark, that Christ is a tree of his Father's planting: John xv. 1: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." Now, when I speak of Christ's being planted, it is only to be understood of him, as to his office, as Immanuel, God-man or Mediator; for considered as to his

divine nature, he is the same independent self existent God with the Father: but, I say, viewing him as Mediator, he is planted by his Father, as the great husbandman. He planted him in his eternal decree, before ever he planted the heavens, or laid the foundations of the earth, Prov. viii. He planted him in his incarnation, by an actual manifestation in the flesh: "A body," speaking of his incarnation, "hast thou prepared me;" he made him "of a woman, *and* of the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh." He plants him declaratively or doctrinally in the visible church: "I have placed salvation in Zion for Israel my glory." He plants him spiritually in the hearts of all the elect in a day of power; at which time Christ is *formed* and *revealed in us*, and *we created in Christ Jesus.*

3. This tree of life, in his first planting and budding, is small, but his latter end doth greatly increase. How small was his first appearance, in that promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent?" no more than a bare hint of his incarnation, and sufferings, in the threatening denounced against the serpent. How small and inconsiderable was he in the eyes of a blinded world, when he first sprang up, in his actual incarnation, like "a root springing out of a dry ground," without any form or comeliness? "He came unto his own, and his own received him not," John i. 11. And when he first begins to spring up in a land by a gospel dispensation, men make so little account of him, that they reckon his gospel *foolishness* and *vain babbling.* And when he first sprouts up in a heart and soul, in a day of power, his grace, his kingdom, is but like "a grain of mustard seed," which can scarcely be discerned. But, I say, although "his beginnings are small, yet his latter end doth greatly increase." The preaching of the gospel of Christ by the apostles, was at first like the scattering of "a handful of corn on the tops of the mountains; but the fruit thereof did shake like Lebanon;" and his spiritual seed and progeny "shall flourish like the grass," or be innumerable like the piles of grass, or the "drops of dew from the womb of the morning." And, however small his first blossomings in the heart be, yet they, in whom he is formed by the Spirit, "shall flourish like the palm tree, and grow like the cedars in Lebanon."

4. Notice that this tree of life, after he had flourished awhile in this lower world, was cut down by the sword of divine wrath and justice: Is. liii. 8: "He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken." The Jews and Romans were but like the axe in the hand of God for hewing down the tree of life; for they did nothing in killing the Prince of life, but what his hand and his counsel had before determined to be done. And oh, many a hack, many a heavy stroke and blow did this tree of

life endure, before he fell down to the ground; "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him." O what a tremendous stroke did justice reach to the tree of life, when he cried, "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow!" The very earth trembled, and the rocks were rent, with the weight of the stroke that was laid upon him for our sins.

5. Although this tree of life was cut down unto death by the hand of justice, yet death could not long keep his dominion over the tree of life; it was not possible that the bands of death, or the bars of the grave could detain him. No, no; three days after he was hewed down, this tree did spring up more tall and glorious than ever. He was, indeed, cut off out of the land of the living, and delivered to death for our offences, but he rose again for our justification, and was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead." Our hope of the inheritance did spring up with this tree of life, when he sprang up again out of the grave: 1 Pet. i. 3, 4: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Our hope and strength had for ever perished, if this tree of life had perished in death.

6. I remark concerning this tree of life, that he does now in his exalted state overtop and excel all the trees of the wood; having drunk of the brook in the way, he has now lifted up his head: hence is that commendation of the spouse, Cant. ii. 3: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons;" he infinitely excels them all, he is fairer, infinitely fairer "than the children of men;" yea, he overtops and excels all the angels in heaven, "he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they: he is far exalted above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that can be named, whether in this world, or that which is to come."

7. I remark, that this tree of life, though he be now exalted far above the heavens, yet his branches bow and bend down to the earth in the dispensation of the word; so that we need not climb or scale heaven to bring him down from above: "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, even the word of faith which we preach." Wherever the gospel is preached, wherever the table of the Lord is covered, there the loaded branches of the tree of life are as it were bowed down to your very hand, so as you may sit

down under his shadow by faith, and taste of his excellent fruit. But this will fall in to be spoken of on the second branch of the doctrine. So much for the general remarks respecting this tree.

Secondly, I come to show why he is called, by way of eminence, *the tree of life*. In general, then, I conceive, he is called *the tree of life*, with allusion to the tree, called by that name, that grew in the earthly Paradise, which it is thought by divines was the sacrament of the covenant of works, which, if Adam had eaten of, after his continuance in his integrity for some time, he would have been thereby confirmed and established in a state of perfect holiness and happiness. And on this account this tree, in the midst of the earthly Paradise, is made use of here as a type or shadow of Christ, of whom if a man once eat, or partake by a true faith, he is secured for ever against the curse, delivered from condemnation, and hath an everlasting name in the family of heaven, which shall never be cut off. But, more particularly, Christ is called *the tree of life*.

1. Because he is the original and fountain cause of our life, both spiritual and eternal. Thy soul, believer, had never fetched one spiritual breathing after God, had not Christ breathed the breath of life in thee: it is "the spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, entering into the dead soul by means of the word read or preached, that "makes us free from the law of sin and death."

2. He is the material cause of our life. It is the very life of Jesus that is in the soul of the believer: Gal. ii. 20: "I live," says Paul; "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Christ formed in the heart, by the power of the eternal Spirit, is the very internal principle of the believer's life; for Christ is in them, and they are in him: so that as it is the life of the head that is in all the members, so it is the life of Jesus that is in all believers.

3. He is called *the tree of life*, because he is the purchaser of our life; and so he is the meritorious cause of life. It was by the death, or down-hewing of the tree of life, that life is bought for a lost world; hence his death is called *a ransom*, and eternal life is called *a purchased inheritance*.

4. He is the preserving cause of our life; he maintains and *holds our souls in life*, by continual supplies and communications. When the soul is in a languishing condition, he *restores* it, as David speaks, Psal. xxiii. 3. He "strengthens the things which remain, that are ready to die." When the soul is just like the withered corn, when the rain of heaven is withheld, he is *as the dew to* it; he *comes down as the rain*, and thereupon *they revive as the corn, and grow as the vine*.

5. He is the final cause of our life. As he is the original, so he is the end of our life: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's," Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

Thirdly, I come to tell you what sort of life springs out of this tree of life. *Answ.* There is a fourfold life to be found in Christ, the blessed tree of life.

1. There is a life of justification, in opposition to legal death. Every man by nature is dead in the eye of the law; just like a malefactor under sentence of death; though he be not actually executed, yet we reckon him a dead man, because he is dead in the eye of the law, the judge having passed sentence against him, and the day of his execution approaching. This is it which every sinner who is out of Christ is under; he is under the law as a covenant, and therefore a dead man in law, the law hath already condemned him, for the law says to every sinner, "The soul that sinneth shall die." Now, so soon as ever the poor sinner comes under the shadow of the tree of life, or by faith tastes of the fruit of this tree, this sentence of the law is repealed and cancelled, by virtue of the imputation of the everlasting righteousness of the Son of God as our Surety; so that the man begins to live even before God as the righteous Judge and Lawgiver, he being vested with that righteousness by which the law is magnified and made honourable. God allows the poor soul to count and reckon upon this, Rom. vi. 11: "As Christ died and rose again; so likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God through Jesus Christ." The believer, by virtue of the righteousness of Christ, is so much alive unto God, that he dare say with the apostle, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?" &c.

2. In Christ, the blessed tree of life, there is to be found a life of sanctification or of holiness. This is the fruit and consequence of the former. A legal death inevitably brings on a spiritual death under the power of sin, for, "the strength of sin is the law." The law slays us and puts out our spiritual life, because of the violation of it. And, on the other hand, a life of justification, inevitably brings with it a life of sanctification or holiness, which lies in the soul's freedom from the dominion and filth of sin: so that the man now having an inward principle of life, begins to yield obedience to the law, not as a covenant, seeking life by it, but as a rule of obedience, that he may "show forth the praises of him who hath called him out of darkness into his marvellous light." And

this life of sanctification he has from Christ, the tree of life: "I am like a green fir tree," says he; "from me is thy fruit found.—Abide in me, and I in you; so shall ye bring forth much fruit." All the fruits of righteousness and holiness are *by Jesus Christ.*

3. By this tree of life we live a life of consolation or comfort; for he is "the consolation of Israel.—With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." The spouse "sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to *her* taste." By eating the fruit of this tree, David declares his soul was "satisfied, as with marrow and fatness;" so that he blessed God with *joyful lips.* Whenever the poor soul tastes of the fruit of this tree, an air of heavenly joy appears in the countenance; the man lays aside his sackcloth, and girds himself with gladness, and is filled with a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." This life of consolation is just up or down, according to the fruit or lively exercise of faith, or according to the coming or going of the Lord; whenever Christ appears, the soul revives and laughs like the fields after a pleasant shower and warm blink.

4. There is a life of glory grows out of the tree of life; for "this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son. *And* he that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that believeth in the Son of God, hath everlasting life;" he hath the earnest, and the security of it here, and he shall have the full possession of it in heaven for ever hereafter. Thus, you see what life springs out of the tree of life.

Fourthly, I shall only add a few properties or qualities of this life that springs out of the tree of life.

1. Then, it is a divine life, it is "the life of God in the soul." A good man is called a godly man, and a wicked man is called godless: why, what think you is the reason of these opposite denominations? The reason of them is, because the godly man has something of the life of God, but a godless man is destitute of the life of God; the expression is scriptural, Eph. iv. 18, the wicked are said to be "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them." It is a divine life; divine in its original, divine in its nature and tendency, and divine in its end; it is a living and a walking with God, as it is said of Enoch. Whenever a man has tasted of the fruit of this tree of life, he can never after it abide out of God's company.

2. The life that comes out of the tree of life to the soul, is, of all others, the most excellent life. There is a threefold life in every man. There is a vegetable life, which he has in common with trees, plants, and other things that spring out of the earth: there is a sensitive life, that he has in com-

mon with the beasts of the earth, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, which all have a life of sense: he has a rational life, by which he is distinguished from the inferior creatures; and this is common to all men. But the believer is "more excellent than his neighbour," for he has a more excellent life than they, even a life which is "hid with Christ in God: He that hath the Son hath life:" and he hath such a life as the rest of the world are strangers to.

3. It is a royal and a princely life that we have from the tree of life; for all believers, who are branches of this tree, are "made kings and priests unto God." No sooner is the soul ingrafted or united to him, but he begins to live like a king, above the world, looking on this dunghill with disdain.

4. It is a heavenly life; it comes from heaven, where the fountain of our life is, and it is ever tending heaven-ward: "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." The believer "desires a better country," and his eye is on the land afar off. He "looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

5. It is a growing life; for "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, flourish in the courts of our God, flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon." This life is always growing, till it "come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

6. It is an immortal, durable, and everlasting life. When the life of the body ends, this life is so far from ending, that it is then consummated and perfected. It is a life that shall run parallel with the life of God for duration. This much for the *first* thing in the text and method, which was to speak a little of this *tree of life*.

II. The *second* thing in the method was, to "speak of the situation of this tree in the city of God;" it is said to be *in the midst of the street, and on each side of the river*. For the illustration of this clause of the text, there are these few particulars that I would observe:—

1. That the city spoken of, is none other than the church of God. I proved in the entry, that whatever respect there may be had to the church triumphant in glory, yet, to me, it is clear, that, in the first place, and immediately, it is to be understood of the church militant here upon earth, which is frequently in scripture called a *city*, Psal. lxxxvii. 3: "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." Psal. lxxii. 16: "The city shall be flourishing, and her citizens shall abound:" which is spoken with a view to the New Testament

church. And all believers, while yet upon earth, are said to be actually come to mount Zion, and to the heavenly Jerusalem: and the new Jerusalem, described in the preceding chapter, is said, verse 10, to "descend from God out of heaven;" because all believers, who are the only true citizens, are born from above, and are entered into the kingdom of God. She is a city for habitation, Psal. cvii. 7: "He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation;" a city of traffic, here the commodities of heaven are exposed to sale, and that at a low rate, "without money and without price," Is. lv. 1; a city for strength, walled about with salvation, Is. xxvi. 1: "We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks;" a city for refuge, a city for immunities, a city for beauty and compactness; a royal city, for there the great King hath his residence, "The Lord hath chosen Zion: he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it," Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14.

2. I remark here, that this city has streets in it; for the tree of life is said to be *in the midst of the street* of the city; where, by the *street*, I understand the ordinances of divine appointment, especially those of a public nature. Cant. iii. 2, the spouse there, when she could not find her Lord in more private retirements, enters upon a resolution to arise, and go through "the streets and broad ways" of the city of God, to see if she could find "him whom her soul loved;" where, by *the streets* and *broad ways*, it is agreed by interpreters, the public ordinances of divine worship are to be understood. And, Prov. viii. 1, wisdom is said "to cry in the streets;" that is, in the public ordinances of worship; which are so called, because, as the street of a city is the place where the inhabitants gather together in concourse, so these ordinances are the public concourse of the church of God, "whither the tribes of the Lord go up, to worship at his footstool." And in these streets and broad ways of ordinances, the inhabitants of the city of God have sweet fellowship and communion with the Lord.

3. Notice here, that there is a river, which is said to run through the midst of the city, and in the streets of it, according to what we have, Psal. xlvi. 4: "There is a river, the streams whereof do make glad the city of God." This is the very same river spoken of in the preceding verse, which is said to "proceed from the throne of God and of the Lamb." When I insisted upon that verse, I showed that this river is nothing else than the Spirit of the Lord, even that Spirit which is said to be "poured upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem," Zech. xii. 10. "The glorious

Lord," by his Spirit and the communication of his grace, "shall be unto her as a place of broad rivers and streams," Is. xxxiii. 21: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground," Is. xliv. 3. By this river, the whole city of God, all true believers, are refreshed, supplied, fructified, cleansed, and quickened. But,

4. Another thing that we may remark here, is, that Christ, the tree of life, is *on each side of the river*, and *in the midst of the street of it.* And here again I conceive there are these things that seem to be pointed at.

1*st*, That a living Redeemer, though he be in heaven exalted at "the right hand of the Majesty on high," and though the heavens are to contain him till his second coming; yet still he is to be found by his people upon earth; yea, he is in every part of his church; for here the tree of life is *in the midst of the street, and one ach side of the river:* that is, wherever believers (the true church of God) are, or whatever be their situation, while in a militant state, Christ is ever to be found; the boughs of the tree stretch themselves out to them wherever they are, though it were to the "uttermost wings of the earth," as the expression is, Is. xxiv. 16. O, what unspeakable comfort is it, that wherever the body is, there the glorious head of the body is! "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto you, and I will bless you." And, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

2*dly*, The expression takes in, that Christ is the centre, and, as it were, the very heart of his church and people; for he is here said to be *in the midst* of the city: as the heart is in the midst of the body, so Christ is in the midst of his church. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early," Psal. xlvi. 5. Christ is the centre of the church's life: "Our life is hid with Christ in God:" he holds our souls in life. He is the centre of light, as the sun in the firmament is to this lower world: "I am the light of the world." He is the centre of comfort: therefore called "the consolation of Israel:" he gives "the oil of joy for mourning." He is the centre of love and desire, "the desire of all nations." "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." The centre of faith; every one of the inhabitants of the city of God have their eyes fixed upon him; they "look unto him, and are saved." "Our eyes are towards the Lord our God." He is the centre of union; they all "hold him as the head, from which the whole body, as by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increase with the increase of God. There

is a great cry for peace, peace, and many politic endeavours to keep the peace and unity of the church, but it is impossible that we can be one, unless it be in the Lord. He is the centre of doctrine; "to him bear all the prophets witness," and to him bear all the apostles witness; and every truth of the word points to him; there is not a word in the Bible but it points toward Christ, as the needle in the compass points to the pole-star. He is the centre of worship; the prayers and praises of all believers terminate in him; they all cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

3*dly*, Christ, the tree of life, being in the midst of the street, says, that Christ is a common and public good to the church, that he is set up for the benefit of all the inhabitants. This tree of life does not grow in a corner, or in any enclosed place, where only some particular persons may enter, but in the public street, in the market-place, where every body has free access to him. It is remarkably to the same purpose, what the spouse says concerning Christ, Cant. ii. 3, she does not say, that her beloved was as the apple tree among the trees of the garden, which is an enclosure; but, he is "the apple tree among the trees of the wood," which every passenger may pluck, and eat, and use with freedom. As every man in the camp of Israel had the privilege of looking to the brazen serpent that was set up in the camp; so every man within the visible church has equal access to Christ, the tree of life, for he is "in the midst of the street of it." O sirs, do not doubt of your warrant to come to Christ, since he is in the midst of our streets, accessible from all quarters of the city. Christ is equally tendered to all in a preached gospel; he is every man's penny-worth, who will but take him, apply him, and lay claim to him. As every subject in Britain may say of our present sovereign, He is my king, because he is set as a public good to the whole body politic; and as every soldier of an army may say of the principal commander, He is my general, in a way of application, and have recourse to him as such; and as every soldier may lay claim to the physician of a regiment, and say, He is my physician, because of the relation he stands under to the whole company: so Christ, being the common Saviour of sinners, the prophet, priest, and king of his church by office, every one may, in a way of particular application, claim the benefit of him in his saving offices, and say, in a way of believing, He is my Saviour, my prophet, priest, and king, for he is "a Son given, and Child born unto us; *he is* made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" and whatever he is as Mediator, that he is to us; he is "in the midst of the street of the city."

4*thly*, It implies that they who would find Christ must seek him in the streets and broad ways of gospel ordinances; for here the tree of life is said to be *in the midst of the street*, in the public ordinances of the church, such as preaching of the word, and administration of sacraments. O sirs, it is "in his temple that every one is made to speak of his glory," Psal. xxix. 9. It is there he causes his name to be recorded; and there it is he has promised to come to his people, and bless them, Exod. xx. 24. And, therefore, they that turn their back on public ordinances, are out of the way of coming to the tree of life. I own, indeed, that the Lord will sometimes meet with a sinner going on in the broad way to destruction, as he did with Paul going to Damascus; but when he does so, he steps out of his ordinary road of doing, for his ordinary way of convincing, converting, and healing souls, is in his sanctuary. We read of one (Paul) converted in the way to Damascus, but we read of three thousand added to the church when attending upon the word preached by Peter, Acts ii. 41. So, I say, they who would find Christ, the tree of life, must come to the streets and broad ways of ordinances, as the spouse did. Many a sweet meeting have believers had with the Lord there: I hope some here can seal it from their experience.

5*thly*, The expression implies, that Christ is to be met with, not only in the public ordinances of the church, but that sweet fellowship with him is to be had also in the more private and secret retirements of the Lord's people; for here the tree of life is not only *in the street*, but *on each side of the river*, through all parts of the city. When employed in family prayer, in secret prayer, secret meditation, private or secret reading of the word, Christian converse, and the like; many a sweet communion with the Lord does the believer enjoy in these. O, says David, "When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." The hearts of the disciples going to Emmaus, were made to "burn while they talked together by the way."

6*thly*, It implies that the influences of the Spirit are absolutely necessary, in order to the sweetening of ordinances, and conveying the fruit of a Redeemer's purchase to them in the use of ordinances: for here the pure river of the water of life intermingles itself in the streets of the city, with the spreading boughs and branches of the tree. Unless the river of the Spirit's influence come along with word and sacrament, "taking the things of Christ, and showing them" to us, we shall find them to be but "dry beasts and miscarrying wombs;" and therefore there is need of a continual depen-

dence on the Lord for the concurring influences of the Spirit of life: "Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but God giveth the increase." And, therefore, pray that the river of the water of life may run down from the throne of God, and of the Lamb, in the streets of the city of God, and that the tree of life may be seen on each side, on every hand, bearing his twelve manner of fruits.

7*thly*, It is implied here, that Christ is the ornament of his church and people; for the tree of life is here spoken of as the ornament of the city in the midst of its streets. Christ is "the glory of his people Israel; *and* in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." He reflects a beauty and glory on the church collectively considered; his presence in the streets of it makes her "beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." And he is the beauty and ornament of every particular believer in the church; every one of them is beautiful through the comeliness that he puts upon them; it is by his merits upon them, and his Spirit within them, that they become, like the king's daughter, "all glorious within, their clothing being of wrought gold." He it is that makes them "like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

8*thly*, It is implied here, that the whole city, and every one of its inhabitants, dwell or abide under the shadow of the tree; for the tree is on every side, and in the midst of the street. I remember the spouse, speaking of this tree of life, says, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight," namely, the shadow of his blood and everlasting righteousness, under the shadow of his faithfulness engaged in his promise, under the shadow of his providence. O happy they, who by faith sit down under this shadowy tree. This is the place where Christ makes his flock to rest in the noon of temptation, affliction, desertion, and tribulation. Thus I have given you the import of that expression, which points out the situation of the tree of life; it is *on either side of the river, and in the midst of the street of it.*

THE TREE OF LIFE, SHAKING HIS FRUITS AND LEAVES AMONG THE NATIONS.

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.—REV. XXII. 2.

THE SECOND SERMON ON THIS TEXT.

I GAVE you this general or comprehensive doctrine from the words, *That our Lord Jesus Christ is a medicinal and fertile tree, planted by his Father in the city of the New Testament church, for the feeding and healing of the diseased and starving nations of the world.*

In the prosecution of this doctrine, I promised,

I. To speak a little of this tree of life.
II. Of the situation of this tree in the city of God.
III. Of the fertility of this tree.
IV. Of the medicinal quality of the tree.
V. Apply the whole.

I have already spoken to the *first* and *second* thing. I come now to

III. The *third* thing in the method, which was, *to speak a little of the fertility or fruitfulness of this tree of life*; it *bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields fruit every month.* Other trees bear fruit only once a year, and they yield but one manner of fruit; but this tree of life *bears twelve manner of fruits every month.* The plain meaning of it is, that Christ brings forth all manner of fruits, and that in Christ all sorts of blessings are conveyed to the children of men, and these are to be found at all times; this tree of life is never empty or barren; whenever the soul applies itself to him in a way of believing, it will still find the branches of the tree loaded, ripe, and ready for use.

Now, for clearing this branch of the text, I shall, 1. Condescend upon some of the fruits that grow upon this tree of life. 2. Tell you of some of the months wherein he yields his fruit to the souls of believers.

First, I would condescend upon some of the fruits of the tree of life. There are only four clusters of his fruits that I would present you with; these are, the fruits of his death, of his resurrection, of his ascension, and of his intercession.

1. Let us take a view, and not only a view, but a tasting

of the fruits of his death. I only present you with these few: O they are sweet to the taste of faith!

1*st*, It is by his death that an angry God is atoned and reconciled. Immediately after the fall, the wrath of God began to break out like fire against sinful man: but by the death of Jesus, the anger of God is taken away, and diverted into another channel, Rom. v. 10; Is. xii. 1: "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." Is. liii. 5: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Col. i. 20, 21: "Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, I say, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven. And you that were some time alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled."

2*dly*, The debt-bond that justice had against us is torn; the hand-writing that was contrary to us is cancelled, Col. ii. 14: "he nailed it to his cross," that it might not be valid; the curse of a broken law is abolished; so that "now there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

3*dly*, Everlasting righteousness is brought in when it was quite out of the world: "When the Messiah shall be cut off, says the prophet Daniel, "he shall bring in everlasting righteousness. Christ condemned sin in the flesh," or by the sacrifice of his flesh, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." So that he is become "the Lord our righteousness."

4*thly*, By his death the covenant is confirmed with many, Dan. ix. 27. Christ confirmed the covenant of grace with his blood, as the public head and representative of all that were given to him by his Father; hence his blood is called "the blood of the covenant, *or* of the new testament." It is a confirmed security on which we may rest; confirmed, I say, by the Testator's death.

5*thly*, By the cutting down of the tree of life, the head of the old serpent that deceived us is bruised, and the power of death wrested out of his hand; "through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

6*thly*, By the cutting down of this tree of life, the grave is sweetened and perfumed.

2. Let us view some of the fruits of this tree of life, in his resurrection, when he sprang out of the grave.

1*st*, The quickening and raising up of the soul that was dead in sin, is a fruit of the resurrection of the tree of life.

This the apostle applies to the resurrection, Col. ii. 12, 13: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you being dead in your sins, hath he quickened together with him." There is a special energy in the resurrection of Christ, by which we are raised up unto newness of life; hence the apostle desires more and more to "know the power of his resurrection," Phil. iii. 10. Hence is that saying of the church, Hos. vi. 2: "After two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

2*dly*, Another fruit of his resurrection, is the discharging of our debt that we were owing to divine justice. Sin is a debt; now Christ paid the debt in his death, and was discharged of it in his resurrection; hence the apostle tells us, that he "died for our offences, and rose again for our justification." The prison of the grave was opened by an order from Heaven—an angel rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre; which plainly shows, that the debt was paid and the great Judge fully satisfied. "He was taken from prison and from judgment." And faith acted on a risen Christ, may challenge the whole world to lay any thing to its charge: Rom. viii. 33: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again."

3*dly*, Another fruit of the tree of life in his resurrection, is the reviving of our hopes of recovering the lost inheritance: 1 Pet. i. 3, 4: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you."

4*thly*, Our victory over sin and death is secured. Every believer viewing a living Christ may say, "O death, where is thy sting?" Yea, by his resurrection our resurrection at the last day is secured.

3. Let us view and taste of the fruits of his ascension to heaven. As,

1*st*, The leading captivity captive: Eph. iv. 8: "Wherefore, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive," carried the spoils of sin, Satan, death, and hell, along with him in triumph.

2*dly*, The conferring of ministerial gifts upon men, yea, the very office of the ministry, and ordinances of the gospel, for the edification of his mystical body, Eph. iv. 8. Our

standing here, and preaching the gospel to you, and administering the sacrament, is a fruit of Christ's being in heaven.

3*dly*, The down-pouring of the Spirit in a more plentiful measure than under the Old Testament dispensation. Of this Christ himself speaks, John xvi. 7: "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." This he did to supply the want of his bodily presence.

4*thly*, The preparing of heavenly mansions for us, where we may be with him for ever, is a fruit of the exaltation of Christ: John xiv. 3: "I go to prepare a place for you; but I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Like a man, when he has married a wife, provides a house for her against the day of marriage; so Christ, having purchased a church, a spouse for himself, goes to heaven to provide her a dwelling; and, indeed, it is a dwelling suitable to so great a King, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Yea, his entry into heaven is a pledge and earnest, an assurance, as it were, that we shall follow him in due time; for he is entered as the forerunner of his church, Heb. vi. 19, not only for our benefit, but in our stead. The head being above, the body shall follow.

4. Let us view and taste the fruits of his intercession, which are great, glorious, and lovely.

1*st*, Freedom from, and strength against temptation, is a fruit of his intercession in heaven: Luke xxii. 31, 32: "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed," or interceded, "for thee, that thy faith fail not." He is privy to all the gins, traps, or snares, that Satan is preparing for his friends upon earth; and he, by the power and prevalency of his intercession, breaks the snare, so that they "escape as a bird out of the snare of the fowler."

2*dly*, Boldness and confidence toward God, and acceptance at his throne, is a fruit of his intercession: Heb. iv. 16: "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. x. 19—22. We durst not look toward the throne of God, if it were not the throne of the Lamb also.

3*dly*, Through Christ's intercession we have a ready answer to all challenges and accusations that are brought in against us from any quarter whatsoever. The law pursues, justice pursues, conscience pursues, for the debt of sin; but faith, eyeing the intercession of Christ, can lift up its head in court, and say, "Who can lay any thing to my charge? It

is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

4thly, The assurance of the effectual application of all the benefits of his purchase, and legacies of his testament, is a fruit of his intercession: for "seeing he lives for ever to make intercession," he will surely take care that the purchase of his blood be not lost, and that the legacies of his testament shall not be null and void; now he is his own executor, lives to see his latter will made good. And what is his latter will? It is just this: "I will be their God: I will be merciful to all their unrighteousness: I will lead the blind in a way they know not," &c.

5thly, The hearing of our prayers, the acceptance of our persons and weak services, is another fruit of his intercession. O sirs, our prayers would never go farther than our lips, if it were not for the intercession of Jesus, Rev. viii. 3, 4: "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand." The ascending of the incense out of the angel's hand before God, notes the complacency that God takes in the service and obedience of his saints through Christ, &c.

Now, put all these together, and see if the tree of life be not a fertile tree; he brings forth twelve manner of fruits; that is, many good fruits, a certain number being put for an uncertain.

Having given you an account of his twelve manner of fruits, I proceed,

Secondly, To notice some of the "months" in which he yields fruit to the souls of his people. You see here, that the tree of life *yields fruit every month*, that is, at all times of the year. Other trees yield their fruit only every year; but here is a tree that yields its fruit every month of the year; there is not a moment of time in which ripe and ready fruit is not to be had for the hand and mouth of faith. And there are some of them summer, and some of them winter months.

1. I say, there are some of them summer-months.

1*st*, then, There is the spring-month, or time of conversion, or effectual calling; the tree of life yields fruit then to the soul. In this month the tree of life drops in life into the dead soul: then it is that the poor soul of the believer begins

first to drink in the sap of the true olive, and to taste of his fruit; then it is that the tree of life yields the fruit of a renewed nature to the soul: "A new heart will I give them, and a new spirit will I put within them," the fruit of the divine image and stamp, a partaker of the divine nature.

2*dly*, There is the pleasant summer-month of manifestations and discoveries of the divine glory of the Lord's countenance. This is called "the time of the singing of birds." "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord; for great is the glory of the Lord," Psal. cxxxviii. 5. "All we with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

3*dly*, There is the pleasant and sweet summer-month of access to God in duties and ordinances. Then he opens the door to them, and brings them into the chamber of presence: "He brought me into the banquetting-house, and his banner over me was love." "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." "My soul is filled as with marrow and fatness."

4*thly*, There is the pleasant month or season of remarkable deliverances that the Lord works for his people, either from spiritual or temporal enemies. The believer feeds so upon the tree of life then, that he cannot but chirp and sing with the church, Is. xii. 2: "Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." And Exod. xv. 1, 2: "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him."

5*thly*, There is the pleasant month of the renewed or lively actings of faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ, or on the covenant and promises. This is a pleasant month, in which the soul is filled with peace and joy; by eating the fruit of the tree of life, we are said to be "filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

6*thly*, There is the month of a lively love to the lovely Jesus. This is a pleasant summer-month, in which the soul feeds liberally on the fruit of the tree of life. When the poor believer gets this and the other promise, and is helped to press with the hand, and suck with the mouth of faith these honeycombs of salvation, oh, how then are the affections of the

soul drawn out after the Lord! The man cries then, with the church, "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee;" and, with David, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

2. As there are summer, so there are winter months, in which the tree of life yields his fruit.

1*st*, There is the sharp-piercing winter-month of conviction, reproofs, and challenges from the Lord, when he challenges for the abuse of mercies, for untenderness of walk, for unkindness to him, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" In this month the tree of life yields the fruit of repentance, "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn.—He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing." It is in this month that sin is imbittered to the soul, and the man is brought farther off the law, and made to flee to the righteousness of the Son of God.

2*dly*, There is the dark and weary winter-month of desertion, when the believer goes "mourning without the sun, *crying*, O that I knew where I might find him! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." Even then the tree of life brings forth fruit by his Spirit in his branches; for hereby they are made more tender, more holy, and more circumspect; hereby they are taught what "an evil and a bitter thing" sin is, that separates between them and their God; hereby the believer is taught the way of living more by faith on the stock in Christ's hand, than upon the grace they have got in their own hand.

3*dly*, There is the weary winter-month of the prevalency of indwelling corruption, when the soul is crying, "Iniquities prevail against me: O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Oh! does the tree of life yield any manner of fruit to the soul then? *Answ.* Yes, for then it is that the soul is filled with self-loathing and abhorrence, with Job, and taught more and more the lesson of self-denial, and to flee to the blood of sprinkling for the destruction of the body of sin.

4*thly*, There is the heartless winter-month of deadness, dulness, and barrenness. This is another melancholy, weary month; but yet in this month the tree of life brings forth his fruit in the soul, and teaches it that its life is not in itself, but in the Lord: "We are dead, *but* our life is hid with Christ in

God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."

5*thly*, There is the stormy month of inward and outward trouble, like two seas meeting together, the soul "afflicted, tossed with tempest;" but yet, even then, he is "laying the stones with fair colours, and the foundations with sapphires," weaning the soul from this world, and "making it meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light."

6*thly*, There is the melancholy and gloomy month of death, in which the shadows of the evening stretch themselves out; the poor soul is held "in bondage through fear of death." Well, even in this month the tree of life bears fruit, which is an antidote against the terrors of death and the grave: by tasting his fruit, the believer can look death in the face, and sing, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" he hath said, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

THE TREE OF LIFE, SHAKING HIS FRUITS AND LEAVES AMONG THE NATIONS.

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.—Rev. xxii. 2.

THE THIRD SERMON ON THIS TEXT.

I GAVE you this general or comprehensive doctrine from the words, *That the Lord Jesus Christ is a medicinal and fertile tree, planted by his Father in the city of the New Testament church, for the benefit of the starving and diseased nations of the earth.*

I. I spoke a little of this tree of life.

II. Of the situation of this tree in the city of God; it is said to be *in the midst of the street, and on each side of the river.*

III. Of the fertility of this tree; it *bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields fruit every month.* I come now to,

IV. The *fourth* thing in the method, which was, to *speak of the medicinal quality of the tree of life;* his very *leaves are for the healing of the nations.*

Now, if time would allow, I might here show, 1. Whom

are we to understand by the nations? 2. What are the diseases of the nations? 3. What are these leaves of the tree, that are for the healing of the nations? 4. How does it appear that these leaves are ordained for the healing of the nations? I can only glance at these particulars.

First, Whom are we to understand by the nations? I answer in a word, By the nations we are to understand all that ever sprung of Adam, every creature endued with a reasonable soul, whether of Jew or Gentile. "Go," says Christ, "and preach the gospel to every creature," without exception, "Go and teach all nations," &c. Go, and tell them, that I, who am the tree of life, am ordained for their use, and there is fruit enough in me, and life enough in me, for every one of them. He is ordained a Saviour for lost sinners. Although I am not for universal redemption, I am for a universal Saviour in the offer of the gospel: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." But I conceive, that here, in a particular manner, the poor Gentile nations are intended, as contradistinguished from the Jews: I say, they, or rather we of the Gentile nations, are in a particular manner intended, because now, under the New Testament dispensation, Christ and the blessings of his gospel are no more confined to the Jews; no, the boundary is broken down, the veil of ceremonies, and partition-wall of the Mosaic testimony, is rent and pulled down; so that "life and immortality are brought to light" to us, as well as to them. The poor Gentiles for some thousands of years were excluded like aliens and foreigners from the commonwealth of Israel; and they, when hearing of Christ, the tree of life, might be ready to say, O can we have any benefit by the tree of life? O yes (says the Lord,) here my Christ, my anointed Redeemer, is given for a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and for salvation to all the ends of the earth; *his leaves are for the healing of the nations.*

Secondly, What diseases do the nations labour under, which make them need the healing leaves of this blessed tree to be brought unto them? Answer in general, ever since the fall of Adam, the whole nations of the earth have been just like a great hospital of diseased persons overrun with a loathsome leprosy. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint: from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in them; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." And if you still ask me, what is to be understood by the diseases of the nations? *Answ.* In a word, it is just the disease of a depraved nature, venting itself in all manner of sin and wickedness. See an account given by the apostle

of the maladies of the Gentile nations before the revelation of Christ, Eph. ii. 1—3; 1 Cor. vi. 9—11; Rom. i. 21, 22, &c., to the close of the chapter. So, then, you see from these scriptures, that the disease of the nations is just original sin, venting itself in all manner of actual transgressions. O sirs, sin has distempered and disordered all the powers of our soul, and all the members of our body; it has blinded the mind, hardened the heart, stupified the conscience, weakened the memory, depraved the affections, turned them quite away from God, scattering them among the vanities of time; it has separated us from the Lord, filled us with enmity, ignorance, pride, hypocrisy, malice, and every evil. In a word, it has brought death upon us; pale death is upon the nations, and every man sprung of Adam by nature through sin: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

Thirdly, What are we to understand by the leaves that are for the healing of the nations? *Answ.* The expression imports, that every thing in Christ is useful and beneficial. The leaves of a tree are reckoned the most unprofitable thing in or about it. Well, but there is nothing in or about Christ, the tree of life, that can be wanted, even these things which carnal and corrupt reason makes little or no account of: his person, his natures, his offices, his appearances, his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession; every thing in him or about him is useful and profitable to the perishing soul, when viewed in the light of the word and Spirit by the eye of faith. But I conceive, that by the leaves of the tree, which have a healing virtue upon the nations, we are in a particular manner to understand the doctrines, promises, histories of his holy word, by which the knowledge of Christ, and faith in Christ, is wrought among the nations of the earth: Psal. cvii. 20: "He sent forth his word, and healed them." The word, accompanied with the power of the Holy Ghost, is "the power of God unto salvation," Rom. i. 16. By the power of his word he created the world, and gave being to man upon earth; and by the power of his word of truth in the gospel, he "creates a new heaven, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." By the word of the gospel he worms out and consumes the devil's kingdom in the world, and in the hearts of sinners; by this weapon, which is "not carnal, but mighty through God, he casts down strong-holds and high imaginations, that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, and brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." By the preaching of the everlasting gospel, in the ministry of the apostles, the nations were healed of their idolatries, superstitions, errors, and other

abominations; as we see in Ephesus, where they were wholly addicted to idolatry, worshipping the goddess Diana, Acts xix. 27.

Thus, you see what are these leaves of the tree of life that are for the healing of the nations, even the truths of the glorious and everlasting gospel, scattered among the nations by the ministry of the word.

Fourthly, How does it appear that this tree, and the leaves of it, are for the healing of the nations?

Answ. 1. It appears from scripture prophecy. Jacob upon his death-bed foretold, that the gathering of the nations should be unto the blessed Shiloh. So, likewise, in Is. xi. 10, we have a prophecy to the same purpose: "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. It was prophesied that the gospel-trumpet should be blown, not only in the land of Judah, but in the other nations under the New Testament: Is. xxvii. 13: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." What else is this but the scattering of the healing leaves of gospel-truths among the nations?

2. It appears from scripture-promises, particularly the promises made to Abraham: "In thee," that is, "in thy seed," namely, *in Christ*, "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Psal. lxxii. 17: "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed." It was promised that he should be a "light to lighten the Gentiles, and his salvation unto all the ends of the earth."

3. It appears from the commission given to the apostles of Christ, after his resurrection, Matth. xxviii. 19: "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Mark xvi. 15: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." So, Acts i. 8: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

4. It appears from the obedience that the apostles of Christ yielded to this commission. They acted according to the instruction they received from their great Lord. It is true, indeed, the apostles for awhile were in the dark respecting the extent of the gospel-offer to the Gentiles, until Peter's vision of the beasts, clean and unclean; but after that they preached the gospel, without any distinction, to Jew and Gen-

tile, offering Christ, and preaching his healing salutary truths, to every man and woman, without any difference of "barbarian, Scythian, bond or free."

5. It is evident, from the actual healing of many among the Gentile nations, by the leaves of this blessed tree. Rev. vii. 4, we read of "a hundred and forty and four thousand sealed (or healed) among the tribes of Israel;" but, verse 9, among the rest of the nations, "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; crying, with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."—Now, from all these it is abundantly clear, that the leaves of the tree of life are ordained and designed for the *healing of the nations.*

V. The *fifth* thing in the method is the *application.* And the *first* use shall be in a few inferences from the whole.

1. Then, from what has been said about this tree of life, we may see that Paradise is again opened and regained for us by the second Adam, to great advantage. You know, immediately upon the fall of Adam he was turned out of Paradise, and "Cherubims, with a flaming sword, turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life," Gen. iii. But here, in my text, Paradise is opened, the tree of life is declared accessible, his fruit being ordained for the feeding, and his leaves for the healing of the nations. In a word, "life and immortality are brought to light through Christ" to lost sinners, who were shut out and banished from the presence of God. And if you should ask me, How comes this about? the answer is, That Christ, as the second Adam, by his blood quenched the flaming sword of justice, the flames of God's anger are quenched through the satisfying blood of Jesus, and, thereupon God casts open the gates of Paradise, he opens a "new and a living way" to glory.

2. See what a glorious and excellent society the church of God is, even the church militant, which is but a faint emblem of what the church triumphant will be. But I say, even the church militant is a happy place; why, you see here that she is the garden of God, there grows *the tree of life*, with his *twelve manner of fruits, yielding fruit every month;* there the tree of life shakes and drops his fruit; there his leaves are to be found *for the healing of the nations;* there flows "the pure river of water of life, which makes glad the city of God." It is said of the earthly Paradise, Gen. ii. 10, that "a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and parted into four streams." Well, here is a far better river, even "the water of life," and

the various streams of the influences of the Holy Ghost. And then, in the description of the earthly Paradise, we are told that *gold* was there, and that *the gold* was *good*, and there was *bdellium*, and the *onyx-stone*. This is much more true of the church of God: there is *gold tried in the fire*, gold far better than the gold of Ophir. O, what a happy and privileged place is the church of God! "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion: out of her the perfection of beauty, God, hath shined; he is known in her palaces for a refuge."

3. See, hence, what a glorious, excellent, sufficient, and suitable Saviour Christ is; he is the tree of life, the fountain of life, in whom all our well-springs are? "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son, as *Mediator*, to have life in himself." He has twelve manner of fruits, suited to the various necessities of lost sinners, ready for use at all times, and in all cases: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily:" and whatever be our soul-diseases, there is a suitable remedy for us in him: "his leaves are for the healing of the nations." So that, I say, Christ is a suitable and sufficient Saviour; "such a high Priest became us," he is excellently calculated to our necessity: whatever hurt or prejudice we sustained by eating of the forbidden fruit, there is now a suitable antidote provided in this blessed tree of life.

4. See what excellent persons believers are. Why, they are the branches and twigs of the tree of life: "I am the vine, ye are the branches:" and all the branches derive their excellency, moisture, and fruit from the root upon which they grow. O, happy they, who, by the Spirit and faith, are cut off from the root of the first Adam, and ingrafted into him, joined to the Lord, and one Spirit with him! Hence believers are called "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

5. See, hence, the excellency of the gospel, which makes a discovery of the tree of life, and brings his fruit and leaves to the nations of the earth. O blessed are the people that know this joyful sound by the gospel, the "mystery which was hid from ages and generations" is revealed. What a happiness is it that our lot is cast in a day and time of the world, in which the paradise of God is opened, and the tree of life discovered by the gospel to the poor Gentiles, who, for so many ages and generations, were "aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise."

6. See, from what has been said, the necessity and excellency of the grace of faith. Why, the tree of life, though it

be growing in the midst of our streets, yet cannot be discerned without faith. Faith is the eye of the soul that looks to him, and discerns him; faith is the mouth of the soul that eats fruit, it is the hand of the soul that takes of his healing leaves, and applies him for curing the diseases of the soul. In a word, without faith we can reap no benefit by Christ. O, sirs, pray for the faith of God's operation, for that faith which is wrought by the word and Spirit of God.

7. See, hence, the necessity of the Spirit, in order to the application of Christ; for the river waters the whole city, and conveys the fruits of the tree of life; "he shall testify of me, he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." O, pray much for the Spirit, plead the promise, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."

8. See, hence, how inexcusable unbelief is, and how justly they perish, who remain in unbelief within the bosom of the visible church where Christ is preached. Why, they have the remedy at hand, suited to their soul's necessity, and yet despise it: the way to the tree of life is opened, yea, the tree of life is *on each side of the river, and in the midst of the street*, as it were, reaching out his feeding fruit and healing leaves unto them, pursuing them with the offers of his grace and love; and yet "they will not come unto him for life." O, sirs, consider it for the Lord's sake: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?"

The *second* use of this doctrine shall be by way of *trial* and *examination*. Sirs, you have been in the streets and broad ways of the city of God, of the New Testament church, where the tree of life grows and flourishes; I mean, you have been attending upon the ordinances of divine appointment, where Christ is to be met with; and, therefore, I ask, What knowledge or acquaintance have you with the tree of life? More particularly,

1. Allow me to ask, Has the life of the tree of life ever entered into thy soul? The life of Jesus is the life of the believer: "I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And if you have any thing of the life of the tree of life in you, you will never content yourselves with an empty profession, unless you be fruitful like the tree of life; there are no barren branches growing upon this tree of life; no, no, your fruit will be unto holiness, you will breathe after the holiness of the Head, likeness to him in all his imitable perfections. The little holiness that is among professors at this day, is a sad evidence, that there are but few of us that were ever ingrafted into this blessed tree of life. If you have life from the tree

of life, you will be careful to maintain that life you have got in and from him. Nature has a liking to every thing that tends to preserve life; so will it be with you, you will delight in the lively oracles and ordinances; "one day in his courts will be better than a thousand;" sin, which is hurtful to your life, will be a heavy burden, you will avoid it as prejudicial to your life.

2. I ask you for trial, Have you been overshadowed with the spreading branches of this tree of life? for, as you heard, the tree of life extends its branches to every corner of the city. Now, can you say, with the spouse, Cant. ii. 3, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight?" When thy soul was like to be scorched with the fire of God's wrath, with the fire of affliction, or with the fiery darts of Satan, or the fire of an awakened conscience, what was it that afforded thee ease and relief? were thine eyes opened to behold the tree of life, and wast thou determined by faith to shelter thy perishing soul under the shadow of his obedience unto the death, under the shadow of his intercession, under the shadow of his faithfulness engaged in the word of promise? Didst thou take up Christ, the tree of life, "as a hiding-place from the storm, and a covert from the tempest?" and did thy soul flee for refuge unto him, renouncing all other refuges as lying refuges, saying, "O this is my rest, here will I dwell: in the Lord have I righteousness and strength," and here will I shelter.

3. I ask, Whether any of the streams of the river, which run under and among the branches of this tree of life, have flowed in upon thy soul? My meaning is, Has the Spirit of Christ entered into thy soul? "I will put my spirit within them," saith the Lord. And if so, the Spirit will be in you as "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The Spirit of Jesus in the soul, is like a living well, having a spring at the bottom whereby it is supplied with water, and this living spring within thee will be bullering up some good thing or other; for "a good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things." Hence, David, Psal. xlv. 1, says, "My heart indites, *or* boils, a good matter;" and then it follows, "My tongue is as the pen of a ready writer." The Spirit of the Lord within thee will be casting up good things of Christ; so that you will be ready to say, "My meditation of him shall be sweet;" some actings of faith, love, repentance, hope, and the like: and these will boil up into good words and actions; so that your tongue will plead his cause, and lend in a word for the Lord, and your hands will be ready to work for him, and your feet to run his errands:

"I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Psal. cxix. 32.

4. I ask, What think ye of the fruits of the tree of life? for, as you heard, he *bears twelve manner of fruit, and yields fruit every month.* Can you say, with the spouse, that you not only "sat down under his shadow with great delight, *but* his fruit was sweet to *your* taste?" and so sweet, that you could not but cry out to your fellow Christians, and say, "O taste and see that the Lord is good: Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul?" There is such a sweetness in the fruits of his incarnation, obedience, death, resurrection, and ascension, that, when it is tasted by the mouth of faith, it goes down sweetly through all the powers of the soul, like new wine, and "makes the lips of them that are asleep to speak." You, who go to a communion table, to word, sacraments, and prayer, and yet never taste of the fruit of the tree of life, you are just like the Egyptian mummies, which are just the bodies of the dead embalmed, which they would keep for four or five hundred years beside them: they brought these embalmed bodies of their ancestors to their table, set them upon their chairs, when at meat. These are a lively emblem of some professors of religion; they sit at the table like others, they keep their seat, but they never eat of the fruit of the tree of life by faith; and "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." O, sirs, will you tell me, is Christ your daily food? Is his flesh good cheer? Is his blood like cooling water to refresh you? Is thy daily exercise to pluck and eat the fruits of his death, resurrection, and intercession?

5. What healing or medicinal virtue have you found in the leaves of the tree, which are *for the healing of the nations?* I told you, that by the leaves of the tree of life, I understand his healing word; "He sent forth his word, and healed them;" because, as the fruits of a tree lie among the leaves, so Christ, and all the fruits of his obedience unto death, and of his resurrection and ascension, are wrapped up in his word of grace and truth in this gospel. Now, then, I ask, What leaves have you gathered and applied on this or other occasions? Can you say, "He sent forth his word, and healed me?" such a word came home with power upon my soul, which was like health and marrow to my bones. I was dead and dull, and lifeless, but he sent forth such a word and quickened me. I was wrapped about with darkness, but he sent forth his word, and "the entrance of his word gave light unto me." I was bewildered in point of duty, but his word

came and directed me, so that it was like a pillar of cloud and fire, to tell me how to direct my steps; he caused me to "hear a voice behind me, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." I was straitened in spirit, so that I could not hear, read, pray, meditate, or communicate; but O he sent forth such a leaf, such a word, and then "my soul was enlarged to run the way of his commandments." My heart was like to sink with sorrow and heaviness, but he sent forth his word and exhilarated me; "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice." Thus, I say, see what healing virtue you have found coming in by the leaves of the tree of life into thy soul.

6. When you get leave by faith to feed upon his fruit, and to apply his leaves, you will just think yourselves in Paradise, yea, in a better Paradise than Adam was in, when in the garden of Eden. O it will be the very pleasure of your life, and the joy of your heart, to be viewing the pleasant tree of life, and to be rejoicing, now and then plucking of his fruit in *the streets* or ordinances of his appointment: we are "filled with joy and peace in believing.—Whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." David found such pleasure in viewing this tree of life by faith, that it was the *one thing* that he "desired, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple; *yea*, one day in his courts was *to him* better than a thousand: *he chose* rather to be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

The *third* use of this doctrine shall be of *Exhortation.*

First, To all in general. O sirs, will you come to the tree of life, for the gates of Paradise are opened again. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come, and he that hath no money, let him come; and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the fruit of the tree of life freely." O dead sinners, will you come to Christ; for he is *the tree of life:* and this is God's record to you, "that he hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son." O starving sinners, come and eat freely and liberally of the fruit of the tree of life, for he *bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields his fruit every month;* he has fruit enough and to spare. O diseased sinners, that are pining away in your iniquities, come to the tree of life and be healed, for *his leaves are for the healing of the nations.* O sinners, who are scorched and burnt up with the heat of divine wrath, or with the fire of an awakened conscience, come and shelter yourselves under the spreading boughs of the tree of life; sit down under his shadow; for he is "a shadow from the heat, and a hiding-place from the storm."

Motive 1. Consider what life is to be had by coming to this

tree of life; a life of justification, sanctification, consolation, and of eternal glory; a divine life, a royal life, a heavenly life, a growing life, an immortal life; all which I spoke of in the doctrinal part.

Mot. 2. Consider what an excellent defence thou shalt find under the shadow of this tree. Here thou shalt find a defence, (1.) Against the wrath of an angry God, who is a *consuming fire.* Our Jesus "saves from the wrath to come."—God declares fury is not in him against any soul that will come under the shadow of his righteousness. (2.) Here thou wilt find shelter against the rage of Satan. The devil must take away the life of the tree of life, he must cut him down again, and pluck off his leaves, before he can win at the soul that is under his shadow. (3.) From the fury of men; he says, John xvi. 33, "In me ye shall have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Mot. 3. Consider the excellent qualities of the fruit of the tree of life. (1.) It is pleasant fruit, sweet to the taste, Cant. ii. 3. None of the trees of Paradise yielded fruit like that which grows in the midst of the New Testament Paradise. (2.) It is profitable fruit; it "cheereth the heart of God and man." God smelt a sweet savour in his death, and "he is well pleased for his righteousness' sake:" and it cheers the heart of the believer who eats of it, puts more gladness in his heart, than the wicked can have in the greatest abundance of their corn and wine. (3.) It is plentiful fruit. Come and eat thy fill, even to satiety; nothing will be missed, the tree is loaded. (4.) There is variety of fruits in this tree. Some fruit trees bear plenty of one kind of fruit; but here is the excellency of this tree, that it has *twelve manner of fruits*, fruits of all sorts, adapted to the necessity of the soul. (5.) The fruits of the tree of life are permanent and perennial, always continuing; for it brings forth fruit *every month*, every season. (6.) It is nourishing fruit. By the fruit of this tree, the soul is made to grow, and "go from strength to strength, until it appear before the Lord in Zion."

Mot. 4. Take a view of the leaves of the tree, and let this invite you to come to it in a way of believing. They are for the healing of the nations. What is thy disease, O sinner? Be it what it will, thou shalt find a leaf of this tree for thy healing. (1.) Art thou a blind sinner? Well, here is a leaf of the tree suited to thy disease, Psal. cxlvi. 8: "The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind." Rev. iii. 18: "I counsel thee to buy of me eye-salve, that thou mayest see." (2.) Art thou deaf, that thou canst not hear the voice of God in his word or rod? Well, here is a leaf of the tree of life for healing thy

disease, Is. xxxv. 5: "The ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." John v. 25: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." (3.) Art thou a lame sinner, who cannot walk in the Lord's way? Here is a leaf for thee; Is. xxxv. 6: "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart:" then, namely, when the gospel shall be preached among the nations for their healing. (4.) Art thou a dumb sinner, that thou canst not speak a word in the matters of God, cannot pray, nor praise? Well, here is a leaf for thy disease, Is. xxxv. 6: "The tongue of the dumb shall sing." Art thou a hard-hearted sinner? is this thy disease that thou findest thy heart like an adamant in thy breast? Well, there is a leaf for thee, Ezek. xxxvi. 26: "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Hast thou a foul polluted conscience in thy breast, that is defiled with the guilt of sin? Well, here is a leaf for thee, Ezek. xxxvi. 25: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Zech. xiii. 1: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness." 1 John i. 7: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Is prevailing corruption, atheism, unbelief, enmity, thy disease? Well, here is a leaf for thee, Mic. vii. 19: "I will subdue your iniquities." Rom. vi. 14: "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Is thy soul, like the mountains of Gilboa, dry, withered like the ground for want of rain? Here is a leaf for thee, Is. xliv. 3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." Art thou troubled with a restlessness of spirit, that thou canst find no rest in any thing? Here is a leaf for thee, Is. xi. 10: "To him shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious." Matth. xi. 28: "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Art thou troubled with a fainting of thy spirit in the Lord's way? Well, here is a leaf for thee, Is. xl. 29: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength." Thus you see that in the tree of life there is a leaf for every disease.

Mot. 5. Consider, that as the tree of life is calculated to thy necessity, so it is ordained for thy use, and for the use of every sinner that will make use of it by faith, John iii. 14—16. He is given to us, Is. ix. 6: "Unto us a son is given." Whatever he is as Mediator, that he is to us. Is he a saviour? it is to them that are lost. Is he a prophet? It is to teach the igno-

rant. Is he a priest? a priest is ordained for men. Is he a king? it is that he may conquer and captivate, rule and govern us. Is he a physician? it is that he may heal the diseased. Is he a shepherd? it is that he may feed us in his pasture. Is he a door? it is that we may enter by him unto God. Is he a foundation? it is that we may build upon him. Is he meat? it is that we may feed on him. Is he drink? it is for the poor soul that is in want of salvation, as a thirsty man is in want of water. Thus, whatever he is as Mediator, that he is to us: "he is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

Mot. 6. Consider, that this tree is accessible; for he is *in the midst of the street.* And though highly exalted, and lifted up above the heavens, yet his boughs stoop and bend down to the very ground, that the hand of faith may reach his fruits and leaves, Rom. x. 6—8. Yea, not only does he bend his boughs, to make his fruit and his leaves accessible; but he shakes and drops his fruit to you in "the valley of vision," and makes it to fall about our tent-doors, just as he did the manna about the tents of Israel. O then put forth the hand of faith and gather.

Mot. 7. You are not only invited, but commanded to eat the fruit, and apply the leaves of the tree by faith. This is the very work of God which he requires of you, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." There is a call, that every one that hears of Christ should make use of him; and if you do not comply, you disobey the great God, in the greatest command that ever he issued out to men; it is not left optional; no, concluded you are under a law to take the fruits of this tree.

Mot. 8. You will die except you eat of the fruit of the tree of life: John viii. 24: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," and so perish for ever: "He that believeth not is condemned already." Stand to your hazard, then. But if you believe, ye shall be saved: "Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." The fruits and leaves of this tree of life are an antidote against the hurt we sustained by our first parents eating of the forbidden fruit, whereby they and all their posterity were ruined.

Thus, I have endeavoured to open the way to the tree of life. What more shall I say? I have endeavoured, even in the motives, to answer the objections of unbelief. I shall conclude this exhortation, by offering a word by way of advice. If you would reap the saving benefit of the tree of life,

1. Be convinced of the absolute need you stand in of Christ,

and his saving fruits. And for this end, think seriously how you are dead, and killed, and slain, by eating the forbidden fruit in your first parents; and how, for the breach of the first covenant, you are shut out of the presence of God. What a heavy heart had Adam when he was banished out of the earthly Paradise, and the flaming sword brandished in his view? O what would he have given to have had access to eat of the tree of life! Now, this is thy case, O sinner; thou art an exile, the sword of justice is flaming over thy head.

2. Be convinced that life is to be had by making use of Christ, the tree of life, by eating of his fruit, and applying of his leaves. And, to convince you of it, you have the record of God for it, the witness of a Trinity: "This life is in his Son; *and* he that hath the Son, hath life."

3. Be well convinced of your warrant to make use of him. And, for this end, think on the command of believing, and the offers, calls, and invitations of the word, and the promises of welcome.

4. Clasp the arms of your souls about the tree of life, and resolve to hang about him for your very life, saying, "If I perish, I perish." But, may you say, I am far away from the tree of life, I cannot get him clasped, or his fruit plucked; therefore I give you,

5. A *fifth* advice, Will you look to the tree of life, and he will drop salvation into thy soul in looking to him: Is. xlv. 22: "Look unto me, and be ye saved.—They looked unto him, and were lightened." But, say you, I cannot see.

6. If you cannot look, will you cry to the tree of life, and seek him, for, "their souls shall live that seek the Lord. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Bartimeus cried, and he heard him; the poor woman cried, "Lord, help me," and he heard her.

7. If you cannot cry, will you long for a tasting of his fruit, for a healing leaf, for some communications of Christ to your soul; "for he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

8. I long, and am not satisfied. *Answ.* "Ye have need of patience;" wait and long, and long and wait, on the Lord; "for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him: he is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him." Wait on him continually; in the end ye shall not be ashamed.

A *second* word of exhortation, is to you who are believers, who have by faith really applied and made use of the tree of life.

1. O rejoice, and be glad in the Lord, that you have re-

gained Paradise again, and that you have not been slain by the cherubim with the flaming sword; yea that, having tasted of the tree of life, and got under his shadow, you are beyond the reach of death, and justice, and the curse. You see it follows my text, "And there shall be no more curse:" no cursing law-penalty any more to them that are come to Christ the tree of life: "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus:" no, no; "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." And therefore "rejoice in the Lord: and again, I say, rejoice."

2. Abide under the shadow, and make your nest among the branches of this blessed tree. O study the spouse; she "sat down under his shadow." You know the birds nestle and build among the branches, thither they flee for safety: Psal. civ. 16, 17, the birds are said to "make their nests *among the* cedars; and as for the stork, the fir trees are her house." So let all the birds of Paradise come and make their nests, their house, and dwelling in the tree of life: "To him shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee," says David, Psal. cxvi. 7.

3. Live upon the fruit of the tree; live upon the fruit of his obedience, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession; be ever plucking the other apple off the tree of life. "The life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," saith Paul. By faith we "eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of man." Be continually making use of Christ, for you will always be needing him; every moment be "building up yourselves in your most holy faith;" be continually "drawing water out of the wells of salvation."

4. Whenever you find yourselves hurt, or your health impaired by corruption, temptation, presently apply the leaves of the tree of life for healing, the healing word, and Christ in it to thy soul: and do it without delay, for delays are dangerous; it is best to take the remedy at the beginning of a disease. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up his standard against him."

5. Be often making use of the river of the water of life, which runs under the boughs of this tree; cry much for the influences of the Holy Ghost; lay your souls open to the blowings of this wind, to the flowings of this pure river of water of life, that so, under the shadow of this tree, you may be "like trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth fruit in season: *for* they that dwell under his shadow shall revive as the corn, grow as the vine, and their scent shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

6. O invite others to come to the tree, and say, *O taste and see that* his fruit *is good*, pleasant, profitable, and plenteous. O study to commend Christ, with the spouse, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." Tell the hungry what excellent fruit is here; tell the weary what glorious rest is here; tell the diseased soul what healing leaves are here; tell the guilty what an excellent righteousness is here.

7. Let your resentment run against those who would hew down the tree of life. O stand up in his quarrel. Attempts have been made, even by some in our own day and land, "to cast him down from his excellency:" but, sure I am, if you ever tasted of his fruit, or were healed by his leaves, you will do what you can to resent his quarrel, and to maintain his glory and excellency, and to vindicate his honour against all the attacks that are made upon it.

8. *Lastly*, Let all the birds of Paradise sing the praises of God, who planted this tree of life for us, and who has opened up a new and living way to the heavenly Paradise, where we shall sing among the branches of this tree for ever. Mean time, O lisp out that song, Eph. i. 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." O sing the praises of him that sitteth on the throne, and of the Lamb; sing that song of the redeemed, Rev. v. 12, 13: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." And let every soul say amen to this blessed song.

N B. Through the importunity of some who heard the three foregoing sermons, the author allowed the notes of them to go to the public, though not so full as he could have desired, particularly that delivered upon the Sabbath.

SERMON XVII.

THE LAW OF FAITH ISSUING FORTH FROM MOUNT ZION.*

For the law shall go out of Zion.—Isa. ii. 3.

THE FIRST SERMON ON THIS TEXT.

From the beginning of this chapter and downwards, we have a prophecy concerning the glorious kingdom of grace, to be erected by the Messiah, under the New Testament dispensation. Where two or three things may be noticed. (1.) By what name the prophet speaks of the New Testament church; he calls it "the mountain of the Lord's house." This is that mountain upon which the Lord promises to "make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees," Is. xxv. 6. Under the Old Testament, the mountain of the house of the Lord was restricted to Jerusalem, the church of God was mostly pent up within the narrow boundaries of Jerusalem and Judea; but under the New Testament, the mountain of the Lord's house is to be found, wherever God is worshipped, the gospel preached, and the mystery of salvation through a Redeemer opened. (2.) We have an account of the in-gathering of the Gentile nations, into the bosom of the church under the New Testament; "all nations shall flow unto it." The kingdom of Christ shall no longer be confined to the nation of the Jews, the natural posterity of Abraham; no, the partition-wall shall be broken down, and "from the uttermost parts of the earth songs shall be heard, even glory to the righteous." This flowing in of the nations into the bosom of the church, points out both the great multitude of converts, and their cheerful submission to the obedience of Christ; they should be innumerable like the drops of water in a river: and as the water of a river flows into the sea, so should the gathering of the nations be unto the blessed Shiloh; they shall come in like troops of volunteers under the banner of Christ: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," or in the day of thy armies, Psal. cx. 3. (3.) We have the encouragement which the New Testament converts give to their friends and neighbours to come along with them, and partake of the blessings of

* Three discourses preached at the administration of the Lord's Supper at Inveresk, August 9, 10, 11, 1729.

Christianity, and share of the advantages of the Messiah's administration; "many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob," &c. They that know Christ, and who have obtained grace and salvation through him, are fond that others should share with them; saying with the woman of Samaria to her fellow-citizens, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" They would have all the world the better of him, could they get their desire.

Now follows an account of the great mean or instrument by which all this should be effected, how the kingdom of Christ under the New Testament should be erected, *The law shall go out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* The last part of the verse is exegetic or explicatory of the first, the word of the Lord that goes out of Jerusalem being the same thing with the law that goes out of Zion: and it is this I am to insist upon at present. Where notice,

1. The designation given to the gospel; it is expressed here under the notion of a *law*. It is generally agreed among all orthodox interpreters, that by the *law* here is to be understood the gospel. And it is not without good reason that they make this to be the meaning; for it is not a law coming out of Sinai, but out of Zion: it is a law which is the great instrument of gathering the nations in to the bosom of the church: *All nations shall flow unto it, for the law shall go out of Zion.* And this is not effected by the law of commandments, but by the gospel only. Indeed, the law of commandments is the instrument of conviction, and "was added because of transgression;" but it is the gospel that is the great instrument of conversion, Rom. x. 17: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, *even* the gospel of our salvation." This is the rod of Christ's strength, which he sends out of Zion, and by swaying of which he brings in armies of volunteers, like "the drops of dew from the womb of the morning." Neither is this the only place where the gospel is called by the name of a *law;* we find Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, using the same form of speech, Rom. iii. 27: "Where is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith." Of which more afterward, if the Lord will.

2. In the words we may notice the royal seat from whence this law is issued; it comes forth from *Zion*. *Zion* was the usual name by which the Old Testament church was called: "The Lord hath chosen Zion: he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it." "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,

God hath shined." And then the church was called *Zion*, from the mount upon which the temple was built: thither the tribes of Israel went up to worship the God of Israel, who dwelt between the cherubims. And we find this name of *Zion* transferred from the Old to the New Testament church, Heb. xii. 22: "Ye are come unto mount Zion, the city of the living God." The reason of which is, because the New Testament church was ingrafted, as it were, into the root of the Old Testament church: all the Old Testament economy being nothing else but a preparative to the glorious displays of the grace, mercy, and love of God, which were to be made to a lost world, upon the coming of the great Messiah: and adorable Providence so ordered it, that at Zion, or Jerusalem, where the Old Testament church expired upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead, there the gospel-Zion, or the New Testament church, was first founded, with the solemnity of the down-pouring of the Spirit in a visible manner upon the day of Pentecost, and the conversion of the three thousand by Peter's sermon, Acts ii., where people of different nations were gathered, such as "Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia, and Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Lybia, Cyrene, strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians;" I say people gathered out of all these nations to Zion or Jerusalem were the hearers of the first gospel sermon; and their hearts being touched with the efficacy of it, no doubt they would immediately spread and propagate it upon their return to their several countries: and thus *the law went out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* Farther, I find in scripture an opposition stated between mount Sinai and mount Zion, Gal. iv. 24, and Heb. xii. 22. Mount Sinai, where the law of commandments was delivered, was a place of terrible blackness and darkness, and tempest; but mount Zion, whence the gospel law is issued, is a place of joy, comfort, and light, a vision of peace. Upon mount Sinai, God appeared in his terrible majesty; but from mount Zion, he appears as a God of peace, grace, and love. Mount Sinai and its law-covenant "gendereth unto bondage; but mount Zion or Jerusalem, which is from above, is free, and her children are the children of the free woman." God came down upon mount Sinai only for a season, and then utterly forsook it; but mount Zion, spiritually considered, is his fixed residence, *Here still I'll stay.* In a word, "the law of works," cometh forth from Sinai; but "the law of faith," the law of grace and love, cometh forth out of Zion.

3. We have the egress of this law from Zion; it *goeth forth*, like a proclamation issued out by royal authority to his sub-

jects, that none may pretend ignorance; it goes forth like the waters of the sanctuary, which issued out from under the threshold of the temple, and ran into the desert of the Gentile nations, making every thing to live whither it came.

Observ. "That the gospel, which is the law of sovereign grace, is issued out from Zion, or published for the behoof of lost sinners, who are sinking under the curse and condemnation of the law of works. *The law shall go out of Zion.*"

In discoursing on this text and doctrine, I shall endeavour to observe the order and method following:—

I. I shall offer some general thoughts respecting the gospel, here called by the name of a *law.*

II. Give the reasons of this designation, or show why the gospel is called a *law.*

III. Notice some of these gospel laws of sovereign grace issuing out of Zion.

IV. Give some of the excellent qualities of this law.

V. Inquire into the differences between the law coming out of Zion, and the law coming out of Sinai.

VI. Wind up all in some practical improvement of the whole.

I. The *first* thing is, to *give some account of the gospel, here called a* law coming out of Zion. All I shall say about it at present is only to tell you,

1. That the word *gospel* properly signifies any good speech, or joyful message: and fitly is it applied to the gospel, because it brings the most joyful message to lost sinners that ever was heard. *Behold,* said the angels to the shepherds, "we bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.—For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." On the same account also it is called "the joyful sound," Psal. lxxxix. 15, 16: "O blessed are the people that know this joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." The gospel brings a sound of liberty to captives, of pardon to condemned criminals, of peace to rebels, a sound of life to the dead, and salvation to them that lie on the borders of hell and condemnation.

2. You would know, that the gospel, strictly taken, is a word of promise. The first gospel that ever was preached to our first parents, when a dismal cloud of wrath was hanging over their heads in Paradise after the fall, was in a promise, Gen. iii. 15: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." The gospel preached to Abraham, what

was it but a promise of Christ? "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gal. iii. 8. And I think it observable, that the same thing which the apostle calls the *gospel*, ver. 8, he calls the *promise*, and the *covenant*, ver. 17—19. So that the gospel, strictly taken, is a word of promise: so Heb. iv. 1, 2, compared;—what the apostle calls "a promise of entering into God's rest" in the 1st verse, he calls the *gospel* in the 2d verse. And a God of love and grace dispenses his grace in a promise, for our encouragement to take hold of it in a way of believing; for there is nothing in which the faithfulness of God is so much engaged as in a promise, the very design of which is to be believed.

3. We are carefully to distinguish between the gospel, and the dispensation of the gospel; for although the gospel, strictly taken, be a word of promise, yet there are many other things that belong to the gospel dispensation. For instance, the whole law of God, considered both as a covenant and as a rule, falls in under the dispensation of the gospel; the law, as a covenant, is a school-master to lead us to Christ, by convincing us of sin and misery; the law, as a rule, comes in to show us what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of us, not for justification, but in point of love and gratitude, even "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God;" and every man that really by faith closes with the promise, or law of grace, will infallibly approve of the law of commandments, as *holy, just, and good:* and thus it is for a light to his feet, and a lamp to his paths. All gospel institutions, such as the word, sacraments, and prayer, and other means of God's appointment, belong to the dispensation of the gospel, being as so many golden pipes, by which the golden oil of the grace of God in the promise is conveyed to the city of God. All the histories, prophecies, and types of the word, what are they but an opening and explication of the promise? Every thing in the word, from the beginning to the end of it, is, some way or other, subservient to the exhibition or application of the promise to us.

4. Since the coming of Christ in the flesh, and the erection of a New Testament church, the gospel is much more clearly preached than it was under the old dispensation. Under the Old Testament, the glorious mysteries of redeeming love lay under a veil of dark prophecies, types, ceremonies, and the like: but now "life and immortality is brought to light;" the mystery which was hid from ages and generations, is made manifest to the saints; the fountains of the great depth of the love, wisdom, and knowledge of God in Christ, are broken up, and set forth in the purest light. Thus much for the *first* thing, which was, to give you a general view of the gospel.

II. The *second* thing was, to *inquire why the gospel is called a law. The law shall go out of Zion.*

1. Then, the gospel may be called a *law*, by way of accommodation, or condescension to the weakness of the Jewish nation, who had the word *law* in such veneration, that they could receive no doctrine but what went under that name and notion. And this is a reason given by some excellent interpreters, why the apostle Paul calls the gospel *the law of faith*, Rom. iii. 27. He became all things to all men, that he might gain some; to the Jews he spoke as a Jew. So here, he speaks to them in their own dialect, when he calls the gospel *the law of faith*. As if he had said, You will needs be justified by the law, why, saith he, you cannot be justified by the law of works; but here is a law by which you may be justified, even by the law of faith, "the gospel of the grace of God." We find Christ accommodating himself much after the same manner to the Jews, John vi. 28. There a company of legalists came to Christ, who had no other notion of the way to salvation but by working or doing, and they say to him, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Christ answers them in their own dialect, ver. 29: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Working and believing stand opposite to one another in the business of a sinner's salvation, as you see, Rom. iv. 5; and yet Christ, to accommodate himself to these Jews, calls faith a *work*, though it excludes itself and all works besides in the business of salvation. So, here, the apostle calls the gospel a *law*, in condescension to the Jews, though, as you heard, it is a law, that requires no works to be done by us; for it is not the law of *works*, but the law of *faith*.

2. The gospel may be called a *law*, because it is the will of a Sovereign, intimated to those who depend on him for their being, and well-being, and who lie entirely at his mercy. A law must bear the stamp of sovereign authority on it: and in this sense the gospel is fitly called a *law*, because it carries the stamp of the authority of Heaven; not only the law of commandments, but the law of faith, or the gospel, is issued forth with a *Thus saith the Lord*. And if the gospel be not received and believed upon this ground, namely, that of the divine testimony, it is not a faith of the right stamp; for the language of faith is, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth:" it receives the whole will of God, and that not as the word of man, but as it is indeed the word of the living God.

3. The gospel may be called a *law*, because of its obligatoriness both upon God and man; it has a mighty force to bind and oblige all concerned. What more binding to God than his own promise? It is to him as the laws of the Medes and

Persians, which he will not come and go upon; no, his promise (which is the law of faith) is not *yea and nay*, but it is always *yea and amen:* and this is the great comfort of believers, that he will not go back with his word; no, "The Strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent." And then, as this law of faith is binding upon God the Lawgiver, so it is binding upon us, to whom it is given; for though it enjoins no duty preceptively, yet it requires faith objectively considered; that is, it is the object of faith, and the matter of faith, the fuel of faith, and it requires or commands faith in us, just as meat and drink require a hungry and thirsty man to eat and drink. when they are set before him. What can be a better invitation to eat, than to have meat set before us, with a hearty welcome to the guests? So what can be a stronger obligation upon us to believe, than to have Christ and his whole fulness set before us, in a full, free, unhampered call, offer, and promise.

4. The gospel is called a *law*, because of the public intimation of it to a lost world. You know laws of sovereigns are commonly proclaimed by heralds, from the market-cross, with sound of trumpet, that none may pretend ignorance: so the gospel is published by heralds, I mean, ministers of the gospel, who are ordered to proclaim it from the tops of the high places, and in the entry of the gates, and places of public concourse; yea, our commission bears us to intimate it to men, and the sons of men, to preach this gospel to every creature, that none may perish through ignorance of the way of salvation.

5. The gospel is fitly called a *law*, because it is the measure and standard of faith; and therefore fitly called by the apostle in the place just now cited, Rom. iii. 27, *the law of faith*. The whole of our religion is comprised in two things, expressed in the 3d question of our Lesser Catechism, namely, what we are to believe, and what we are to do. As for the last, namely: What duty God requires of man; it is summarily comprehended in the law of the ten commandments. that is the standard and measure of duty; and there is nothing sin but what the law forbids, and nothing duty but what the law requires. But as for what we are to believe concerning God, to the salvation of our souls, the gospel only is the standard of that. Our faith is to be bounded by the gospel, as our practice is by the law; so that we are not to receive for doctrine the dictates or notions of men. True faith will receive nothing, it will believe nothing but just what God says in the gospel; it will take and entertain every word of God and no more; it is the measure of faith, and the true boundary of faith; and therefore fitly called *the law of faith.*

6. The gospel may be called *the law of faith*, because of the invincible power and force that it lays a sinner under to receive and believe it, when accompanied with the energy of the Spirit. I remember that this same apostle frequently calls indwelling sin a *law*, Rom. vii. 23: "I find a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind," And Rom. viii. 2: "The law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Sin is called a *law*, because of the power that it has over the man, to lead him captive to its service: so, for the same reason, the gospel may be called *the law of faith*, because, when accompanied with the efficacy of the Spirit, "it is the power of God unto salvation; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." It is "mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ, and brings every thought into captivity to his obedience." O that the gospel may be indeed the law of faith to many in this respect, that it may be the power of God to the salvation of their souls.

7. I think it may be called a *law*, in respect of the royal throne from which it issues forth. The law of commandments comes from God's throne absolutely considered; but the law of faith goes out from the throne of God and the Lamb, that is, from a throne of grace: hence we read of the "pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb:" which may be understood of the doctrine of the gospel, which is frequently in scripture compared to water. It is from this throne that all the laws of grace in the gospel are emitted. And then,

8. Because the promise, which is the soul of the gospel, runs in the style of adorable sovereignty, even of sovereign grace: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people. I will be merciful to their unrighteousness," &c. And when this law of grace is received by faith, the soul just says, O Lord, thy will be done, and it shall be done because it is thy will. And this leads me to,

III. The third thing in the method, which was, to *take notice of these laws or edicts of sovereign grace issued forth from Zion, for the benefit of sinners perishing under the sentence of death, through the breach and violation of the law of works.* We that are ministers are the heralds of the great KING, whose name is, "The Lord God merciful and gracious:" and are by our office not only to stand upon mount Sinai, and publish the law of works, with the curses that it thunders against every one that continues not in all things that are written therein to do them; but, in a special manner, we are obliged to stand on mount Zion and Gerizim, to "preach the gospel of

peace, and bring glad tidings of good things;" and we dare not for our souls conceal his faithfulness and loving kindness from the great congregation of Adam's family. And therefore I, as one of the meanest heralds of the great KING, whose throne is high and lifted up, do, in his name and authority, publish from this high place of the city of God, some of these laws of sovereign grace, enacted at a throne of grace, beseeching and entreating every man and woman hearing me, to take the benefit of the great gospel law. Whatever thy case be, O sinner, though ever so desperate in thine own eyes, yet thou wilt find an act of grace in the court of mercy suiting thy condition. As,

1. Let us suppose the worst that can be, that thou art *without God in the world;* which is the case of every man and woman by nature since the fall of Adam; we have lost our God, the greatest and most comprehensive loss a creature can sustain. Well, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, that God, having found a ransom, and smelt a sweet savour in the death of his eternal Son, issues forth a law of grace from mount Zion, saying, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" and with this law of grace he ushered in the moral law at mount Sinai, Exod. xx. 2: "I am the Lord thy God," &c.; which is the sum and substance of the covenant of grace. This law or act of grace is laid as the foundation of obedience to all the commandments of the moral law; yea, by the first commandment, every man and woman in the camp of Israel was bound to lay hold on it, and to know and acknowledge the only true God as their God, and to worship and glorify him accordingly. O sirs, answer the design of this edict of grace, and believe that it is as God says, upon the ground of his own promise in Christ. See the echo of the soul to this law of grace, Psal. xvi. 2: "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord." Zech. xiii. 9: "I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." But of this I have spoken more largely in a separate discourse.

2. Poor sinner, art thou lying under a burden of sin and guilt, which is like to sink thee down to the lowest hell? Well, here is a law of faith for thee in that case to plead upon before a throne of grace, Is. xliii. 25: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." To the same purpose is that act of sovereign grace, Heb. viii. 12: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Now, let faith plead this law or act of grace in prayer, for a free discharge of the debt of sin you are lying under to the law and justice of God; and if you do, you may lift up your head from under

the burden of guilt, and cry, "Who can lay any thing to *my* charge?"

3. Art thou molested with the workings of indwelling sin and corruption? Well, here is a law passed for thy relief against that enemy; it is enacted by sovereign grace, and registered in the court-book of the grace of God, Rom. vi. 14: "Sin shall not have dominion over you; because ye are not under the law, but under grace." See another law to the same purpose, Mic. vii. 19: "I will subdue their iniquities." Whenever iniquity is prevailing, or indwelling corruption like to get the upper hand of thee, go to the court of grace, and present this act or law of grace to God, and tell him, Lord, hast thou not enacted and ordained, that "sin shall not have dominion?" hast thou not doomed this bosom-enemy to destruction? Such a corruption, such a lust, such an idol is usurping dominion over me; hast thou not said it shall be otherwise? Lord, put thine own law in execution, and so it shall be, because sovereign grace has said it.

4. Art thou assaulted with the fiery darts of Satan? is that roaring lion coming upon thee with open mouth to devour thee? Well, poor soul, here is a law of faith in thy favour, "The God of peace shall tread Satan under thy feet shortly; *his* grace shall be sufficient for thee, and *his* strength perfected in thy weakness." Take the benefit of this act of grace, and let faith carry it to the court of grace, where it was passed, saying, "Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me;" I know not what to do: wilt not thou who hast spoiled principalities and powers, and who hast doomed Satan to destruction and came to destroy his works, wilt not thou either free me from the molestation of Satan, or give me strength to stand my ground? But,

5. Art thou perplexed with the fears of apostacy, that the little measure of grace thou hast will never carry thee through, but that thou shalt fall away, to the reproach of religion? Up the heart, O poor trembling soul, there is a law, an act passed in the court of grace, that "he who hath begun the good work in thee, will carry it on to the day of Jesus Christ:" and that "though thou fall, thou shalt arise; for the Lord upholdeth thee with his hand:" it is enacted, that "thou shalt hold on thy way, and wax stronger and stronger," till thou "return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon thy head." And, therefore, let faith be set at work upon these acts, to plead their forth-coming at the hand of him that passed them.

6. Art thou afraid of days of tribulation and persecution for the cause of religion, or days of personal trial? Well, take courage, there is a law of faith passed in the court of

grace, that though "in the world ye shall have tribulation," yet "in me ye shall have peace:" it is enacted, that his presence shall be with thee in fire and water, Is. xliii. 2: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee:" it is enacted, that "thy light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work for thee a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while thou lookest not at the things that are seen, which are temporal, but at the things that are not seen, which are eternal:" it is enacted, that "though many be the afflictions of the righteous, yet the Lord will deliver him out of them all." Now, let faith be set at work to improve these acts or laws of grace, for the King that has enacted them will see to make them good.

7. Art thou under pinching wants, either as to soul or body? Well, there are acts or laws passed in the court of grace for thy supply. As to bodily wants, it is enacted, that at least "bread and water shall be sure," and that no good thing shall be wanting, that is for his glory and thy good. As for soul-wants, it is enacted, that "out of Christ's fulness thou shalt receive grace for grace;" that "when the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." And therefore let faith fix upon this law of faith, and say, "My God will supply all my need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus."

8. Art thou in a strait as to sin or duty, that thou knowest not to what hand to turn? Well, in this case it is enacted, that "thou shalt hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it: *that* he will lead the blind in ways they know not; *that* he will lead them in paths that they have not known; *that* he will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." And, therefore, let faith fix upon the honour and faithfulness of him that passed such an act, and say, with David, "Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory," Psal. lxxiii. 24.

9. Art thou complaining of the want of the rain of the Spirit, by the withholding of which thy soul is like the mountains of Gilboa? There is a law passed in the court of grace, Is. xliv. 3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." Ezek. xxxvi. 27: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

Hos. vi. 3: "I will come to them as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

10. Art thou complaining that thy heart is hard like a piece of the nether mill-stone; that thou canst not get it melted or softened, either by word or rod, promise or threatening? Well, there is a law passed with relation to the stony heart, that the Lord himself will take a course with it, Ezek. xxxvi. 26: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." And, therefore, take that act to the court of grace, and put the King to his word, and believe it, that he who has said it, will do it; that he who has spoken it, will also bring it to pass.

11. Art thou within views of death and eternity, and afraid to look the King of terrors in the face? Well, there is a law of sovereign grace passed, which thou mayst carry in the hand of faith, before which the terrors of death do vanish, Hos. xiii. 14: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." It is enacted, that "thy God will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; *that* he will be thy God for ever, and thy guide even unto death."

Thus, I have endeavoured, according to the measure of grace given me, to publish some of the laws or acts of grace coming out of Zion; for the Lord's sake, take the benefit of them in the way of believing. Perhaps you may say, O these are beneficial laws indeed to them to whom they pertain; but, alas! I cannot think they pertain to me. I answer, These laws of grace pertain to the whole visible church; that every one that hears the joyful sound of them, may take the benefit of them by faith. If ye will not believe me, I hope you will believe the Spirit of God, speaking by the apostle Paul, Rom. ix. 4; where, speaking of the Old Testament or Jewish church, he says, "To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." Now, I ask, Is the privilege of the New Testament church retrenched, or made narrower than the privilege of the Jewish church? No, by no means; it is rather enlarged. Did the covenant and the promise pertain to them? And do they not appertain to us also? Yea, the apostle, Heb. iv. 1, tells us plainly, that they are left to us as the latter-will of our glorious Redeemer; and therefore we are to take care that we do not lose the benefit of it through our unbelief: "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should come short of it." And the apostle Peter, speaking to a company of men

whose hands had lately been dipped in the Redeemer's blood, to encourage them to believe, he expressly tells them, Acts ii. 39, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Therefore, I say, do not put away these laws from you, as things you have no concern in; for "to you is the word of this salvation sent:" and, in the name of God, I certify and warn every man and woman hearing me, that if you do not take hold of the law of grace by faith, the law of works and its curse will take hold of you; yea, it has seized upon you already, the fire is already kindled in his anger; for "he that believeth not, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." When you refuse to take the benefit of the law coming out of Zion, I mean, of the gospel of the grace of God by faith, you offer the most signal affront to the great God; you *make him a liar*, and upon the matter say, that his laws of grace, his promises, are not to be trusted. And is it to be imagined, that such horrid blasphemy can go unpunished? For the Lord's sake then, take heed what you are doing.

I should now proceed to the *fourth* thing proposed, and give you some of the excellent qualities of the *law of faith*, but shall go no farther at present.

THE LAW OF FAITH ISSUING FORTH FROM MOUNT ZION.

The law shall go out of Zion.—Isa. ii. 3.

THE SECOND SERMON ON THIS TEXT.

The doctrine I noticed from the words was, *That the gospel is a law of grace, issued out from Zion, for the benefit of lost sinners, lying under the sentence of death for the breach and violation of the law of works.*

The law of works is issued out from Sinai, but it must be a law of grace that comes out of Zion, these two mountains being commonly opposed one to another in scripture, as the apostle Paul clears, Gal. iv. and Heb. xii. Mount Sinai is represented as a theatre of wrath, wrapped about with blackness, and darkness, and tempest; but mount Zion, as a theatre of grace, love and mercy, displayed towards lost sinners, through "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." At mount Sinai is heard the voice of thunder and vengeance against "every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;" but at mount Zion is heard the joyful sound of

life, light, liberty, peace, pardon, and salvation to the sinner, who was in danger of being consumed with the flames of divine wrath. So that it cannot be the law of works, or the law commanding works of righteousness to be done by us, but the law of grace, the law of faith, or gospel, which is here to be understood by the prophet, when he says, that *the law shall go out of Zion;* and the prophet here, in the last clause of the verse, gives a commentary upon his own words, lest his meaning should be mistaken, "and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The law coming out of Zion, and the word of the Lord issuing from Jerusalem, are one and the same thing. Now, what was the word of the Lord that issued from Jerusalem, but the glorious gospel, which, according to Christ's command given to his disciples, began first to be preached at Jerusalem after his resurrection, and from thence ran forth to Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth, by which the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled, that the waters of the sanctuary should run down into the valley of Shittim?

The method in which I proposed to prosecute the doctrine was,

I. To show what the gospel is, which is here expressed under the notion of a *law.*

II. To inquire into the reason of this denomination.

III. To notice some of these royal laws or acts of grace which go out of Zion.

IV. To give some of the qualities or properties of this new gospel law.

V. To inquire into the differences between the law of works coming forth from Sinai, and the law of grace going out of Zion.

VI. To apply.

I spoke on the first two of these yesterday, and entered also upon the third. I was endeavouring, as one of God's heralds, to proclaim some of these laws of grace which come out of Zion, that sinners might take the benefit of them by faith, and plead them in the court of grace.

Art thou going under a burden of guilt, which is like to sink thee down to hell? Well, there is a law of grace for thee, Is. xliii. 25: The charge runs very high against Israel in the preceding verse; "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." One would think, that immediately the sentence of the law of works would follow, therefore thou shalt die for ever, therefore I will weary thee through eternity, with the arrows of vindictive wrath, drinking up thy spirits: but sovereign grace takes the start of justice, issuing out an act of indemnity, "I, even I am he that blotteth out thine iniquities." Art thou

molested with the workings of indwelling sin? There is a law of grace issued out of Zion suiting thy case, Rom. vi. 14. Art thou assaulted with the fiery darts of Satan? Well, here is an act of grace for thy relief, Rom. xvi. 20: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation:" or if the temptation be continued, there is an act of grace for thy support and through-bearing, 2 Cor. xii. 9. Art thou black and polluted like hell; ashamed to look God in the face through a sense of thy pollution and defilement? There is an act passed in the court that looks favourably upon thy case, Ezek. xxxvi. 25: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean;" and, Psal. lxviii. 13: "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." Art thou now and then affrighted at the sight of the pale countenance of the king of terrors, so as to fall a trembling at the thoughts of thy dissolution? Well, even in this case there is an act of grace to secure thee against danger, Hos. xiii. 14. Art thou afraid of a sentence of condemnation, when thou comest before the tribunal? There is an act or law of grace that secures thee against this, Rom. viii. 1: "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Thus, you see that there are laws of grace issued out of Zion answering every case. What shall I say more? By this law of grace God has bound himself to be "our God," and that "we shall be his people," that "he will never leave us nor forsake us," that "he will heal our backslidings, love us freely, and receive us graciously." In a word, all the promises of the covenant are acts of grace, or gracious interlocutors issued from a throne of grace, for the benefit of lost sinners.

But may the sinner say, These indeed are glorious and surprising laws; but alas! I have no interest in them, I dare not claim the benefit of these acts, for I am a sinner, I am far off. I answer, Acts of grace are only calculated for sinners; a righteous man doth not stand in need of an act of grace, but of an act of justice in his favour. If thou wert as righteous as Adam was before he fell, thou mightest claim life, and all things belonging to it, as a debt; but thou art a sinner, who has lost all claim and title to life by the law of works; and the law of grace is fitted and calculated by Infinite Wisdom for such only. And whereas you say, you are far off; know for your encouragement, that grace speaks "peace to them that are far off, and to them that are near," Is. lvii. 19: and Acts ii. 39: "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off: To you is this word of salvation sent." This law of grace is preached to every creature, that every creature that hears it may take

the benefit of it, and come in to God through Christ by virtue of it. I proceed now to,

IV. The *fourth* thing proposed, which was, to *give you some of the excellent qualities and properties of this law of grace coming out of Zion.* O sirs, it is the most excellent law for a lost sinner that ever was. The excellency of it will appear in the following particulars, which may be improved as so many motives to excite and engage sinners to take the benefit of it.

1. Then, It is a *life-giving* law to them that are legally and spiritually dead. Since the fall of Adam the law of commandments never gave life to any of his posterity; no, the law of works is weak through the corruption of nature, to do any thing for fallen man. Instead of giving life, it claps on the sentence of death upon us for every and the least sinful thought, word, or action. The apostle plainly insinuates that neither life, righteousness, nor any good, can come to a sinner by any commanding law whatever, Gal. iii. 21: "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." But, sirs, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which may make the heart of a sinner to flutter in his breast; although the law coming out of Sinai, or the law of commandments, cannot give life or righteousness, yet here is a law of grace coming out of Zion, that gives both; and if thou wilt but give this law a fair hearing, life will come in with it to thy dead soul, Is. lv. 3: "Hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." And what is it that the lost sinner is to hear? You see how earnest the Lord is for sinners to listen, three times in a breath he calls them, ver. 2, 3, to arrest their attention, *Hearken diligently*, and then a second time, *Incline your ear*, and a third time it is repeated, with a promise of life, if they will give him a hearing, "Hear, and your soul shall live." Well, surely something of moment is to be said after all this solemnity, ver. 4, you have an act of sovereign grace, making a grant of Christ to lost sinners, and it is (besides all the former solemnities) ushered in with a *Behold*, as a note of attention and admiration, "Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, for a leader and commander to the people." There is the law of grace coming out of Zion, and "whoever believes it, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." O let the lost sinner entertain and welcome it, for "it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation." See the law giving life proclaimed by the apostle John, under the notion of the record of God, 1 John v. 11: "This is the record, that God

hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son." O sirs, set to the seal that God is true, apply this grant of eternal life through Christ to your own souls in particular, hold God at his word, for he will not go back; "his gifts are without repentance."

But O, may you say, that God has given eternal life to the elect, and to believers, I believe to be a truth; but he has not given eternal life to the like of me, for I am none of these. I answer, Many a one shall go to hell who set to their seal to this as a truth, that God has given eternal life to the elect, and to believers; and therefore that cannot be the thing intended by the Spirit of God in that record: no, the meaning must be, that God has in his indefinite promise, by an act of sovereign grace, made a grant of eternal life to sinners, lost and undone sinners of Adam's family; and this is issued out of Zion, that every one may take the benefit of it, by setting to the seal that God is true and faithful, not to others only, but true to his own soul in particular; that he has given or granted eternal life to me in and through his Son Jesus Christ, in whose hand eternal life lies, ready to be given out to every one that takes hold of it, by virtue of the law of grace, or covenant of grace and promise. O sirs, take the benefit of this grant of sovereign grace, since no less than your life, yea, the eternal life of your souls lies at the stake: "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." And if the life of the body be so valuable, that a man will risk all that he has in a world to preserve it, how much more valuable is the life of the immortal soul? O think, and think again, upon that awful word of Christ, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matth. xvi. 26. For the Lord's sake, then, take the benefit of this law, giving life to your poor souls, which must inevitably perish through eternity if you do not.

2. This law coming out of Zion is a law of *love*. The gospel is just the warm breath of a God of love. Love is the imperial attribute of his nature; and to make way for its manifestation, in consistency with the honour of justice, God spared not his own Son, but gave him to the death for us all: O "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. The gospel is the proclamation of this love of God, in giving Christ and all things freely with him: John iii. 16: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Every word of the gospel smells rank of the love of God to lost sinners. Here we may see his wings of love spread

out to cover and hide them from avenging wrath and justice, the arms of love stretched out to embrace them, the hand of love held out to help them, the eyes of love beholding them with infinite compassion, the bowels of love sending out a sound after them, crying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn unto me and live."

3. The law coming out of Zion is a *righteous* law, or a law of righteousness to the guilty sinner, who is far from righteousness. Sirs, you and I are fond enough by nature to seek righteousness by the law of works, though it be a thing utterly impracticable for any sinner, that has but once broken a command of that law, to attain it. We read, indeed, that the Jews attempted it; "they went about to establish a righteousness by the law, and would not submit unto the righteousness of God." Well, but did they make it out? No: see what the apostle says, Rom. ix. 31, 32: "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; *and* by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." But, sirs, though you can never attain righteousness by the law of works, yet here is a law by which righteousness may be attained; yea, a righteousness which will answer the law of works in all the commands, demands, and penalties of it: Rom. viii. 3, 4: "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." The gospel, which is the law coming out of Zion, reveals the righteousness of Christ, for the sake of which God is well pleased, because it *magnifies the law* of works, and *makes it honourable*. It not only reveals this righteousness, but brings it near to the sinner, who is far from having any righteousness of his own: Is. xlvi. 12, 13: "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness." Sirs, the devil, and an unbelieving heart, will persuade you, that Christ, and his righteousness are quite out of your reach, and that it is needless, for you to look after it; Christ is in heaven, and how shall I be the better of him? But, for the sake of your immortal souls, beware of this way of thinking, for it brings in a secret despair into the heart, that makes men hang down their hands, and turns them quite careless and indifferent about Christ, his righteousness, and salvation. See what the apostle says to you and me, Rom. x. 6—8. He had told, ver. 5, what the law of works says: "The man which

doth those things, shall live by them;" but then he tells what the gospel says, which he calls "the righteousness of faith, *because* therein the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith," from the faith of God revealing, to the faith of man receiving. Well, what says the gospel, or the law giving righteousness? It "speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach." What can be nearer to a man, than the word that is in his mouth, or the thought that is in his heart? Yet so near does Christ, and his righteousness, and salvation, come to every man that hears the gospel; for if when we are speaking of it, or thinking of it, our souls would but believe it, Christ and his righteousness become our own for ever. And, therefore, you that would have a righteousness to answer the charge of the law of works, a righteousness that will bear you through when you come to the tribunal of God, O take hold of the law of faith coming out of Zion; "for therein is revealed the righteousness of God;" Christ is therein given and offered as "the Lord our righteousness. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

4. The law which comes out of Zion, as you heard, is an *indemnifying* law, Heb. viii. 12; Is. xliii. 25. The very name of him whose law it is, is "The Lord, merciful, and gracious, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin;" that is, all sorts of sins, great and small; and whatever be their number or quality, it is his glory and prerogative to forgive. It is true, "he will by no means clear the guilty," without a satisfaction to justice; but the satisfaction is made, the ransom is found, and he is just in pardoning as well as condemning; he is just in pardoning the sinner that believes, as well as just in condemning the sinner that believes not. Yea, for your encouragement to take the benefit of God's indemnity that comes out of Zion, I tell you that the justice of God is more glorified in pardoning the sinner through Christ, than in punishing and exacting the debt from the sinner in his own person: for when justice falls upon the sinner, and exacts the debt of him, it will be taking satisfaction of the criminal for ever, and yet will never be satisfied; but when he assoils a sinner through the blood of Jesus, as mercy is magnified, so justice is satisfied to the full. Hence is that of the apostle, Rom. iii. 25, 26: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbear-

ance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

5. The law coming out of Zion is a law of *peace*, or a law enacting peace, and proclaiming peace to the sinner, who has been waging war against heaven: "I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near." Indeed, an absolute God appearing from a tribunal of justice, proclaims red war against every sinner, every transgressor of his law; "he is angry with the wicked every day," yea, so angry that he declares "there is no peace to the wicked; he will wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of him that goes on in his trespasses." But the same God appearing from mount Zion, from a mercy-seat sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, proclaims peace to the greatest sinner on this side of hell; he holds out the sceptre of peace to them, inviting them to touch it, and "take hold of his strength, that they may make peace with him, and they shall have peace with him." See a word to this purpose, 2 Cor. v. 19, 20: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." O then, rebels, take the benefit of the law coming out of Zion; and he who "ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious," will give grace even unto you: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;" and let him turn by faith to a God in Christ, "and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

6. This law coming out of Zion is a law of *liberty* to the sinner, who is a lawful captive to the law and justice of God, and under bondage to sin and Satan; Christ having satisfied justice, grace steps up to the throne, and issues out her warrant for sinners to go free. By this law coming out of Zion, it is enacted, that the sinner should come forth, and he that sits in darkness is allowed to show himself as a freeman in the eyes of the whole world. I say, this law is a law of liberty, not to sin, but of liberty from sin, from the guilt, filth, and power of it. "Sin shall not have dominion over you," is one of the royal statutes of the court of grace. O "prisoners, come forth," accept of liberty, upon the law issuing out of Zion. How deservedly shall you lie in chains through eternity with the devils, if you do not!

7. The law coming out of Zion, is an *easy* law, no hard

task imposed on you as the condition of life. It does not, as the law of works, require you to do and live; it does not require you to spin a righteousness out of your own bowels, but to receive a righteousness wrought out by a Surety, and made ready to your hand; it does not require you to purchase salvation to yourselves, but to receive a salvation already purchased by Christ; it does not bind you to obey the law, in order to obtain a title to life, but it presents you with a title to life, through him who is the righteous Heir, even Jesus Christ. Here then is a law that needs not be grievous, a yoke that is easy, a burden that is light indeed; yea, this law of faith makes the law of works easy and light, because it affords righteousness to fulfil it as a covenant, and strength to obey it as a rule. So that, I say, it is an easy law that comes out of Zion, it is a law of rest to the weary; "Come unto me all ye that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you rest:" and whenever a poor soul by faith takes the benefit of this law of grace, immediately he *enters into rest*, Heb. iv. 3.

8. This law coming out of Zion is a *dignifying* and *ennobling* law; whoever takes the benefit of it, that moment he becomes "a son of God, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ; he has a name given him better than of sons and daughters, even an everlasting name that shall never be cut off." You, and I, as we are descendants from the first Adam, are base-born heirs of hell, children of wrath and condemnation; but here is a law, which, if improved and received by faith, does, by an act of grace, translate you out of the family of hell into the family of heaven. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." O then take the benefit of the law of grace.

9. It is a law of *adorable sovereignty*. Never did the sovereignty and royal majesty of Heaven shine with such a lustre and beauty in the law issued from Sinai, as it does in this law of grace, which comes out of Zion. Indeed, the sovereignty of justice, equity, and holiness, shined and doth shine in the commandments of that law which was published at mount Sinai; but in this law which comes out of Zion, the sovereignty of grace, love, and mercy shines, and the justice, holiness, power, and wisdom, and other attributes of the divine nature, which were displayed in the law of works, appear as so many pillars supporting the fabric of grace, and the acts of grace which are published in the gospel.

10. This law coming out of Zion is a *sure*, *firm*, and *irrepealable* law, which can never be disannulled; it is "of grace that it may be sure to all the seed;" it is surer than the laws

of the Medes and Persians, surer than any bond or charter that ever was framed by the wisdom of man. The worm and moth will eat all your charters to your earthly inheritances; but the gospel covenant, which is the law of grace, is a charter, that cannot change for ever; it is "established in the very heavens; *yea*, heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of *it* shall never fall to the ground. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee."

11. The law coming out of Zion is a law that lies *open* to every man that hears or reads it; I mean, every man has liberty to take the benefit of it. You know every man in Britain has the benefit of the laws of the kingdom, or of the acts of parliament, or proclamations of the King. Acts xix. 38, says the town-clerk of Ephesus to the people that were risen in a mob at the instigation of Demetrius, "If Demetrius and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open:" so say I, as the laws of the kingdom are open to rich or poor, to claim the benefit of them in the proper courts of the kingdom; so the law of grace, the covenant of promise, is open to all that live within the visible church, the kingdom of Christ. "O blessed are the people that know this joyful sound," so as to take the advantage of it; "the promise is unto you, and to all that are afar off." We that are ministers intimate and proclaim the gospel, the law of grace, that every creature may take the benefit of it; that which was once spoken in the ear, or sounded in secret into the ears of the disciples, do we now proclaim, as "upon the house-tops, or in the high places of Zion: Unto you, O men, do we call, and our voice is to the sons of men. *O!* Let us fear, lest a promise being left us, any of us should seem to come short of it." So much for the *fourth* thing.

V. The *fifth* thing in the method was, to *inquire into the difference and agreement between the law coming out of Zion, and the law coming out of Sinai;* or, in other words, *between the law and the gospel.*

1. Then, The law of commandments coming out of Sinai is a thing known (though not in its uttermost latitude and extent) by the light of nature; as is clear, Rom. ii. 14, 15, where the apostle tells us, that "the Gentiles which had not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts," &c. The writings of Seneca Plato, Confucius, and other heathen moralists, are incontestable evidences of the truth of this. But now the gospel, or the law of grace, which comes out of Zion, is a thing only known

by supernatural revelation from on high. Search all the volumes of the heathen philosophers, from one end to the other, you shall never find in them the least hint of an incarnate Deity, or of the glorious mystery of salvation through a crucified Christ. Indeed, they discovered God as a creating God, and as a governing God, as a commanding and threatening God; but they never discovered him as a promising God in Christ; no, no, this is only owing to the discovery that God has made of himself in the gospel. Yea, the mystery of salvation through Christ is so much out of the ken of natural reason, that even after it is revealed externally in the dispensation of the word, yet such is the ignorance and depravation of nature, and the strong bent that it has toward the law, that it cannot know, and cannot receive it, till a beam of supernatural light shine into the heart: hence Christ tells his disciples, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to others it is not given." The light of natural reason is so far from receiving the gospel revelation, that it spurns at it, and opposes it with might and main: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" said the Jews to Christ. The gospel preached by Paul, was "a stumbling-block to the Jews, foolishness and vain babbling to the Greeks and wise Athenians." Hence comes the difficulty of believing in Christ to the saving of the soul. The strong bias and current of nature must be altered, and reason (which sits king in the soul) deposed from its sovereignty, and lie down as a servant at the feet of sovereign grace reigning through the imputed righteousness of the Son of God: and you know the change of government and administration in a kingdom is not effected commonly without a mighty struggle between parties contending for the sovereignty; hence comes the "confused noise of the warrior, and garments rolled in blood:" self-reason, self-will, self-righteousness, and self-confidence, study to maintain their claim to the government of the heart against grace; and this makes "as it were the company of two armies," between whom the war is continued, till death sound the retreat.

2. The office of the law of works coming out of Sinai is to discover sin and guilt; "it was added because of transgressions," says the apostle. "By the law is the knowledge of sin, *and* sin by the commandment appears to be exceeding sinful;" and at the bar of the law, "the whole world is found guilty before God; no flesh living can be justified," if God deal with us according to the terms and tenour of the law. But now the office and province of the gospel coming out of Zion is to discover Christ, as "the Lord our righteousness, *and* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The gospel tells us, that "Christ has finished transgression,

and made an end of sin, brought in an everlasting righteousness;"—that "he was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The gospel shows how the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us, namely, by God's imputation and faith's acceptation of the righteousness of God revealed for this end in the gospel.

3. The law of works is a cursing and condemning word to the guilty sinner, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;" it cries "Wo, wo, wo, to the inhabitants of the earth;" nothing but clouds of wrath and vengeance are to be seen by a guilty sinner when he looks toward Sinai; "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish unto every soul of man that doeth evil." But now the gospel is a word of blessing; it presents Christ the blessed seed of Abraham, and cries, "Men shall be blessed in him, and all generations shall call him blessed." The law is a word of wrath, but the gospel comes with the olive branch of peace; the law displays the red flag of war, but the gospel casts out the white flag of reconcilation, saying, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," sending out a word of reconciliation; and, "O how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

4. The law coming out of Sinai is a slaying and killing word to the sinner. Paul had the experience of this at his first conversion; it was a keen arrow dipped in law-vengeance, that struck him to the ground in his way going to Damascus, and made him cry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Hence it is that he thus expresses himself, Rom. vii. 9, 10: "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." But now the gospel, or the law coming out of Zion, is a word of life; the first sound of the gospel, when it reaches the heart, is like life from the dead to the poor soul that was lying in the regions and shadow of death; by it we are "begotten unto a lively hope of eternal life, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." It is with a view to the preaching and publication of the gospel in the power of it, that Christ says, John v. 25: "the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live:" hence the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation," it contains "the words of eternal life." "Go," says the Lord to the apostles, when he is dismissing them from the prison, into which they were shut up by the persecuting Jews, "Go, stand and preach in the temple to the

people, all the words of this life;" that is, go preach the gospel, publish my law of grace to lost sinners, notwithstanding all the malice and power of your enemies, Acts v. 20.

5. The law of works coming out of Sinai, is a word of bondage; but the gospel coming forth from Zion, is a word of freedom and liberty. This the apostle illustrates at great length, Gal. iv. from ver. 22, and downward, where he compares those who are under the law to Hagar and Ishmael her son; those who are of the gospel, or children of the promise, to Sarah and her son Isaac, ver. 24: "Which things are an allegory; for these are the two covenants, the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar." And, ver. 25, 26: "This Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all." And, ver. 28: "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." And, ver. 30: "Cast out the bond-woman and her son; for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman." From all which it appears, that the law is a word of bondage, and they that cleave to it are in bondage to sin, to Satan, to the curse and wrath of God; but the gospel is a word of liberty, and they who do by faith receive and entertain the joyful sound of it, are not the children of the bond-woman, but of the free; being freed from the law as a covenant, freed from its curse, from the dominion of sin, and the power of Satan, and advanced into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is very remarkable, that Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman, is cast out of the family, even after he had done many things in obedience to his father Abraham; all his services he had done in the family would not give him a title to the inheritance; no, notwithstanding all he had done, he is disinherited: just so is it with the legalist, who keeps and obeys the law in a servile way, with a view to entitle himself to the inheritance, or to deliver himself from hell and wrath by his obedience; all his service stands for nothing, at last he is cast out with the son of the bond-woman. But as Isaac, being a child of promise, was, by virtue of the promise, entitled to Abraham's estate, before ever he was capable to do his father any service; just so is it with believers; they renounce all claim to the inheritance of eternal life by the law, or the works of it, and serve themselves heirs to the inheritance by virtue of the *promise*, which is *yea and amen in Christ*. Thus, I say, the law gendereth to bondage, but the gospel to liberty and freedom.

6. Whatever the law gives to any of Adam's race, it gives

in a way of debt, whether it be life or death. If a man keeps the law perfectly, he shall have life as his reward, and as a debt due to him in a pactitional way; if he break the law, he shall have death, as a debt due for his rebellion against Heaven; hence "the wages of sin is death:" Rom. iv. 4: "To him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." But now whatever the gospel, or the law coming out of Zion, gives to any, it gives in a way of grace or free gift; hence we are told, that "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" and this is asserted upon the record of a Trinity, "that he hath given unto us (namely of his own sovereign grace) eternal life, and this life is in his Son. It is "not by works of righteousnes, which we have done, but according to his mercy that he saves us." By the law of works justice reigns either to eternal life, or to eternal death, as the law is kept or broken; but by the law of faith, or the gospel, "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

7. The law of works is calculated for the justification of a righteous man, like Adam in a state of perfect integrity, and it speaks peace to none but such; but the gospel, or law coming out of Zion, is calculated for the justification of the fallen, ruined, and bankrupt sinner: it shows a way how God justifies the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly." None but they who own themselves ungodly and unrighteous, can enjoy the privilege of justification by the gospel; for "Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

8. The law of works, through the depravation of nature, irritates and strengthens corruption; Rom. vii. 5: "The motions of sins which are by the law, work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." And, ver. 8: "Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." And, ver. 11: "Sin taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." From which it appears, that the law, considered abstractly, instead of being the death of sin, is the strength of it. Whenever the commandment of the law is broken, the curse takes place, of which this is a particular branch, that such a man shall be given up to the power of sin, that he may be capable to do nothing but sin, and sin on till he has ripened himself for hell and wrath; "My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels." It is the voice of the law, and the most terrible voice that it utters on this side of hell, Such a man is "joined to his idols, let him alone; he builds altars to sin, and altars shall be unto him to sin." Thus, the law of works, instead

of weakening sin in the soul, gives up the sinner to the power of sin, that he may go on without any restraint, till the final sentence of the law be executed with a vengeance. And then corrupt nature is so impetuous, that the more it is hemmed in by the law, the more does it swell and rage, till it has broken down and broken through all the boundaries the law set against it. Thus, I say, the law of works abstractly considered, through the depravation of nature, irritates and fortifies corruption. But now the gospel, or law coming out of Zion, enters into the heart, and, through the power of the eternal Spirit, wastes, weakens, and kills it in the very source and fountain; for "we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body." And how do we receive the Spirit? "Not by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith." I own indeed, that the law which urges obedience and doing, may have so much influence upon those who are under it, as to smooth and polish their outward conversation; but yet it leaves the heart and will obstinate against its spiritual commands; the iron sinew is never bowed by any power that the law hath, corruption keeps the throne in the heart: but gospel grace enters the strong holds of iniquity, casts down the high imaginations that advance themselves against the knowledge of Christ, and brings every thought to his obedience. Moses, we read, entered the border and outskirts of Canaan, such as the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, but never pierced into the heart of the country to subdue the Canaanites; this was left for Joshua, a type of our JESUS: just so is it here, the most the law can do to them that are under it, is only to restrain sin in the conversation, to reform the life; it may bring a man to serve in the oldness of the letter, while sin still keeps the throne in the heart; hence either pride or hypocrisy, or raging despair, remains with the legalist; it is only the gospel, or the law coming out of Zion, that is "the power of God unto salvation."

9. The law of works coming out of Sinai is a word of precept, or a commanding word; but the law coming out of Zion is a promising word. By the gospel God shows what he is to do for us and to us of his sovereign grace; by the law he shows what we are to do for him in point of duty: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" By the gospel God shows what we may expect from him; and by the law he shows what he expects from us, in a way of duty and gratitude. The gospel is the boundary of faith or things to be believed; the law is the boundary of practice, or things to be done by us. In a word, all precepts whatever belong to

the law; but all promises, offers, and revelations of grace, belong to the gospel.

10. The law of works enjoins duty, but gives no strength to discharge it; the law does not furnish the bankrupt with any new stock with which to fall a trading, but supposes us to have the stock and strength that God gave us at our creation; it abates nothing, remits nothing of its demands upon the account of our weakness, but requires as much service of the sick and weak sinner as if he were sound and strong; it admits of no composition or allowance to the insolvent debtor. But now the law coming out of Zion considers the sinner as bankrupt; and therefore presents him with an *everlasting righteousness*, with which to answer the law as a covenant: it considers him as wholly impotent for any duty; and therefore leads him out of himself to Christ, as the "strength of the poor and needy; *it* gives power to the faint, and increases strength to them that have no might;" it teaches the soul to say, Though I be not sufficient to think a good thought, or to do any duty of the law, yet "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." The gospel law coming out of Zion considers the man as poor; and therefore presents him with "gold tried in the fire, to enrich him:" it considers him as naked; and therefore presents him with *white raiment:* as blind; and provides him with *eye-salve, that he may see:* it considers him as starving for want; and therefore invites him to "eat that which is good, and to delight himself in the abundance of fatness:" as bewildered; and therefore shows him "the new and living way" to glory, crying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Thus, I have showed some of the principal differences between the law and the gospel.

I shall conclude the doctrinal part of this discourse, by pointing out, in a few words, the harmony and agreement between them; for although there be all these differences between the law and the gospel, yet there is no feud between them. They sweetly stand together in their proper place; the law is not against the gospel, nor the gospel against the law; no, there is a pleasant harmony, which will appear, if we consider, that by the gospel, the law reaches its end, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." In the gospel we see the law fulfilled as a covenant, and settled as a rule of obedience. I say, it is fulfilled as a covenant by the righteousness revealed in the gospel; yea, not only fulfilled, but "magnified and made honourable," a new and superadded glory reflected upon it, by Christ, the Son of God, his being "made under the law, to redeem us who were under the law." And then by the gos-

pel it is also settled as a rule of obedience, Rom. iii. 31: "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." The gospel brings to light new motives and arguments to obedience, which the law itself, abstractly considered, could never afford; namely, arguments drawn from the consideration of redeeming grace and love, which have a more constraining power to obedience with an ingenuous spirit, than all the curses and penalties that the law denounces against those who do not continue in obedience to it.

Again; the harmony of the law and gospel appears in this, that the law paves the way to the entertainment of gospel-grace; for it is a school-master to lead us unto Christ, that we may be justified by faith." The law is a lance in the hand of the chirurgeon to open the ulcer of sin and corruption within us; the gospel, as a medicinal balsam, drains and gradually heals it, when applied in a way of believing: the law is a plough to till up the fallow-ground of the heart of man; the gospel is the good seed cast into the furrows, which being impregnated by the dew of heaven, makes it spring up to everlasting life: the law is a hammer to break the rock in pieces; the gospel dissolves it with the warm fire of the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. Thus, the law is subservient to the great design of the gospel.

Again; what the law teaches preceptively, the gospel teaches effectively; the law enjoins the duty, the gospel furnishes with grace to obey it; there is no duty the law requires, but there is suitable furniture in the gospel-promise to discharge it. Does the law require us to *know the Lord*, which is the first precept in the moral law? Well, here is suitable grace provided in the gospel, "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord." Does the law require us to "trust in him at all times?" Well, the gospel-promise is suited to this, "They shall trust in the name of the Lord," Zeph. iii. 12. Does it require of us to "love the Lord our God with all the heart, soul, strength, and mind?" Here is gospel-grace to effect it, "I will circumcise their hearts to love the Lord their God." Does it crave obedience, saying, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect?" Well, the grace of the gospel says, "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Does the law enjoin us to "sanctify the Lord in our hearts, and make him our fear and our dread?" the grace of the promise exactly suits that; "I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." Does the law require us to "call on the name of the

Lord, *to* worship and serve him?" The gospel promises, that the "spirit of grace and supplication shall be poured out, *to* help our infirmities, *and* to teach us to pray, *and* praise," and perform other acts of worship. Does the law enjoin us to repent, and turn from the evil of our ways? The gospel promises the *heart of flesh*, in place of the *heart of stone:* and tells us, that "God sent his Son to bless us, in turning away every one of us from our iniquities." Thus, you see that what the law teaches preceptively, the gospel teaches effectively.

Again; I might tell you that the harmony between the law and the gospel appears in this, that the law discovers the sinner's duty, and the gospel discovers the object of duty; the law enjoins faith, the gospel lifts up Christ the object of faith: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so is the Son of man lifted up," namely, upon the gospel-pole; "that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life." The law enjoins the sinner to love God with all the heart; but it is the gospel only that presents God in such a view, as to become an object of love to a guilty sinner, namely, as he is a reconciled God and Father in Christ; for viewing God absolutely, as he is presented in the glass of the holy law, he is an object of terror instead of love. The law enjoins us to turn from sin, under the pain of eternal wrath and vengeance; the gospel shows the sinner a refuge to which he is to turn: "Turn ye to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." The law enjoins mourning for sin, "Rend your hearts and not your garments;" the gospel presents a crucified Christ, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, whom, when the sinner views by faith, he "mourns, as one doth for an only son, and is in bitterness, as one is in bitterness for a first born." The law requires us to worship the Lord our God; the gospel discovers both the object and the way of worship; I say the gospel discovers the object of worship; namely, a God in Christ, and the way to the holiest opened by the blood of Jesus.

To conclude, the law by its terror sweeps away the refuge of lies; the gospel discovers a new foundation of hope and help, saying, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: and he that believeth on him, shall not be confounded." The law saps the foundation of sand, and overturns the tower that the sinner was building in order to reach heaven by it; the gospel discovers the rock of ages, upon which the sinner may build his house, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. The law, when viewed spiritually, drives the sinner out of himself, by discovering his emptiness, poverty and misery; the gospel draws and invites him out of himself, by discover-

ing the all-fulness of a Redeemer to supply his wants, though ever so great. The law lets the man see that he has no money nor price; the gospel shows that though he has no money nor price, yet he may come and buy gold tried in the fire, white raiment, and eye-salve. The law lets the sinner see that he is shut up in a pit, wherein there is no water; the gospel shows how the sinner, by the blood of God's covenant may come forth out of the pit, and opens a fountain of living water, where he may draw and drink with joy. The law leads us to Christ for righteousness; the gospel sends us to the law as a rule of obedience, as a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths. Thus, the whole life and work of a Christian is a continual traffic from the law to the gospel, and from the gospel, back again to the law as a rule. So much, then, shall serve for clearing the harmony and agreement betwixt the law and the gospel.

VI. The *sixth* and *last* thing proposed, was the *application* of the whole. And the *first* use shall be by way of *caution*, to prevent the abuse of this doctrine.

Although, as you have heard, there be such a law of grace issued out of Zion for the salvation of lost sinners; yet let none from this conclude, or infer that the law of commandments coming out of Sinai is to be laid aside as a thing useless under the dispensation of the gospel. There are two extremes corrupt nature is ready to carry people into, who hear the word preached: they are ready either to turn in to the Antichristian or Antinomian camp. I say, some are ready to turn in to the Antichristian camp, by setting up the law, and the works of it, in the room of Christ and his everlasting righteousness; and this is the extreme that all legalists run into, whose hearts are not sufficiently loosed from the law as a covenant. But then there are others, who, having some notional knowledge of the doctrine of grace, of the law coming out of Zion, in their heads, and being strangers to any heart acquaintance with it, begin to imagine, that the moral law, or the law of commandments, is a useless thing under the gospel, and that it is a matter of indifference whether they obey it or not; and thus "turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness." I may have occasion afterward to guard you against the first of these extremes; at present I would offer something to keep you from the Antinomian extreme of casting away the law coming out of Sinai as a thing useless and unprofitable under the gospel. And this I shall endeavour to do, by telling you of several excellent uses that the law serves for, even under the gospel. I shall not enlarge upon them, some of them having been just now touched upon, in clear-

ing the differences and harmony between the law and the gospel. Know, then, that divines tell us of two main ends for which the law was promulgated from mount Sinai: the one was political, the other theological.

1. There was a political use of it, which the apostle seems to point at, 1 Tim. 8, 9: "We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers," &c.; that is, it was made for them, if not for their rule that it should be their punishment.

2. The *second* use of it is theological or divine. This theological or divine use and end of the law is twofold. 1*st*, In those who are not yet justified. 2*dly*, In those that are justified.

1*st*, I say, in those who are to be justified, but are not yet in a state of justification. And the use of it, with respect to them, is to discover sin, or humble them for it, that so they "through the law may die to the law" as a covenant, and so betake themselves to Christ, who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

2*dly*, In those that are justified, the holy law serves, (1.) As a rule of obedience, to direct to what is duty. (2.) As a glass to discover the holiness of God, and the imperfection of our obedience, that so we may see a constant use for Christ, both for righteousness and sanctification. (3.) It serves as a bridle to restrain and hem in remaining corruption, as a rod to chastise and correct for sin, 2 Tim. iii. 16. The Lord makes use of it as a whip to lash his own children with inward terrors, when he sees it needful for them; hence we find them sometimes complaining that *the arrows of the Almighty are within* them, namely, the arrows of legal terrors, *drinking up their spirits, and setting themselves in array against* them. This is something of the "spirit of bondage unto fear," which yet believers do not receive in a way of vindictive anger, as the wicked do, but in a way of fatherly correction. This much, then, by way of caution, to prevent Antinomianism, either in principle or practice. Beware, then, of casting away the law coming out of Sinai as a useless thing; if you do it, it is an evidence that you never yet truly received the grace of the gospel. It is among the acts or laws of grace coming out of Zion, that "God will write his law upon the hearts of his people, and put it into their inward parts;" so that they are made to "delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man." It is, and will be the study of the true Israel of God, to "walk according to this rule;" and David's prayer will be

often in their hearts and mouths, Psal. cxix. 80: "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed:" and ver. 5: "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" And if there be any here, who under pretence of gospel-grace, discard the law of commandments, I shall only refer them to that awful word of God, Psal. l. 16, 17: "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thy back." Do not then pretend to be saved by God's covenant, while you disregard his commandments.

Use *second* of this doctrine may be of *Information*, only in two or three things. Is it so that the gospel or law of grace is issued out of Zion, for the benefit of sinners lost and condemned by the law of works? Then,

1. See hence how agreeable it is to the revealed will of God, that a sinner believe in Christ. Why, in believing we both answer the authority of God enjoining faith in the law of commandments, and God's great design in the gospel or law of grace, which is to bring Christ and his grace near to sinners, that they may receive him by faith: John xx. 31: "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name."

2. See the horrid evil of the sin of unbelief, which tramples both law and gospel under foot. It contemns the authority of God interposed in the law of commandments; for "this is his command, that ye believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." And it despises the riches of his grace manifested in the gospel or law of grace: it calls God *a liar*, and in effect says, not a word or promise that ever he uttered is to be trusted. Remember that awful word, Heb. x. 28, 29.

3. From this doctrine see what a fair way sinners living under the gospel dispensation have for the eternal salvation of their souls; why, they have the law coming out of Zion, acts of grace and mercy issued out and proclaimed to them, and they fully warranted and authorized to take the benefit of it. If a company of condemned rebels had the king's indemnity or act of grace proclaimed to them, and the act put in their hand, who would be to blame if they did not take the benefit of it? Surely none but themselves. The case is the very same with sinners, condemned by the law, by conscience, and heaven and earth: they have the gospel or law of grace published to them, with this view, "That they may not perish, but have everlasting life. For unto you is the word of this salvation sent. The promise is even to them that are afar off." O sirs, "how shall ye escape if ye neglect so great a

salvation," and a salvation brought so near to you in the "word of faith which we preach?" Rom. x. 8.

4. See hence what a happy and auspicious government and administration believers are under: they are not under the rigorous administration of the law or covenant of works, requiring either perfect or sincere obedience as the condition of life, but under the mild government of grace, where the law coming out of Zion prevails: Heb. xii. 18, compared with ver. 22—24: "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire; nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest;—but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Every son of Adam lives within the confines of one of these mountains; I mean, of mount Sanai, or mount Zion. The sinner that is out of Christ, let him be what he will, a sober moralist, a painted hypocrite, or loose and profane, he lives within the confines of mount Sinai, and remains a debtor to do the whole law, under pain of eternal death: but that moment a sinner believes in Christ, by virtue of the covenant of grace, or the law issued forth from Zion, he is joined to that heavenly corporation of the church militant and triumphant, consisting of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and imperfect on earth, of which Christ is the glorious head, (called *mount Zion* and *the heavenly Jerusalem*,) where he is for ever delivered from the commanding and condemning power of the law as a covenant, so that he is no more to look either to be justified or condemned by it. By the law coming out of Zion, he is exempted from the command of the law as a covenant; so that it cannot exact obedience of him, as the condition of life, this being done by the Surety. He is exempted, also, from the curse of the law as a covenant; so that it cannot threaten him with the penalty of eternal death, Christ his Surety having endured that in his room and stead; so that there is no condemnation to him, being in Christ Jesus. Not only so, but by virtue of his union with Christ, the Heir of all things, he is entered among "the general assembly of the first-born," who are all "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." Thus, I say, the believer lies under a happy and auspicious administration; on which account we may apply the words of Moses, Deut. xxxiii. 29: "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help,

and who is the sword of thy excellency!" or this of Balaam, Num. xxiii. 9: "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations."

5. From this doctrine see whence it is that believers, when under the influence of the spirit of faith, have such boldness and assurance in coming to a throne of grace. Why, the man has law, even the law coming out of Zion, on his side, and this gives him courage and boldness in asking grace and mercy to help him in time of need. You know, a man, who has business in any court, if he has law on his side, holds up his head, and looks with an air of courage, and speaks with boldness to the judge. This is the case with the believer, he has the law coming out of Zion, the acts of grace, acts of peace, I mean, all the promises of the well-ordered covenant, on his side; he pleads upon these, fastens upon the veracity of a God of grace, and requires him to do as he has said, to see to the execution of his own will of grace, enacted at a throne of grace, and registered in the court-book of the grace of God. This, I say, is the ground of his confidence, Heb. x. 22: "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water;" upon which it follows, ver. 23, "For faithful is he that hath promised."

Use *third* of this doctrine may be of *Confutation* to Papists, Arminians, Pelagians, Baxterians, and others, who make the gospel a new preceptive or commanding law, requiring faith, repentance, sincere obedience, and the like, which they say were never required in the moral law from Sinai, by which they destroy one of the main differences between the law and the gospel; for, as I said already, the law is a system of precepts, the gospel a system of promises, or acts of grace strictly considered; and to bring in new commands into the gospel, which were never contained in the moral law, has been, and is, a doctrine of a most pernicious tendency, in regard it derogates from the perfection of the moral law, as if under the gospel there were sins which it doth not forbid, and duties which it doth not require. They who assert, that faith and repentance are not enjoined, and that unbelief and impenitency are not forbidden, even in the first commandment of the moral law, contradict our received standards of doctrine, particularly the Larger Catechism explaining the first command; they must needs assert another righteousness than the righteousness of Christ to fulfil the new gospel law, seeing Christ was not made under it, but under the moral law, as a covenant, to redeem us who are under it. When we sinned in Adam we did not break the new gospel law, but the old moral law of the ten commandments; and if Adam never broke

that new gospel law they speak of, his posterity cannot be blamed if they want power to repent and believe; and if faith and repentance be enjoined by a new law, it is equitable that a new fund of strength be given, in order to our obeying it: and thus the Pelagian universal grace bestowed on every man that hears the gospel is introduced. Many other things might be said on this head, but I do not insist.

Use *fourth* may be of *Trial*. Whether are you under the law of Sinai, or of Zion? Whether are you under the law covenant, or gospel covenant? Are you yet staying at mount Sinai, with "the bond-woman and her seed?" or are you come to mount Zion, the place of freedom and liberty, with "the children of the promise?" For clearing of this matter I offer the following things by way of trial:—

1. If the law never slew you, you are under it, and married to it as a husband: Gal. ii. 19: "I through the law, am dead to the law." Rom. vii. 9: "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Every man naturally sits mounted upon the throne of his own imaginary righteousness; he imagines himself to be alive, and that he is capable to do well enough, by his own endeavours after life. But when the law of God comes in its spirituality, it shakes the foundation of his refuge of lies, just as the earthquake shook the foundation of the prison at the jailer's conversion, making the poor man to cry out, "O what shall I do to be saved?" Try yourselves then by this. Has God brought you to the foot of Sinai, making the thunders of his law to awaken you out of your security? Has he given you such a view of the law in its extent and spirituality, that you became quite dead to all conceit of righteousness by any doing or obedience of your own, saying, "All my righteousness is as filthy rags?" If you were never yet brought to this pass, I fear you are yet strangers to the law of grace issuing out of Zion, and that you are yet under the law of works as a covenant.

2. You who do not know what it is to watch, and pray, and wrestle against the legal bias of your hearts, it is a sign that you are yet cleaving to mount Sinai law. As every man by nature is seeking righteousness by the law of works; so believers themselves, while they have any thing of the old Adam in them, will find a strong bias in their hearts to return to that husband: he finds it a matter of the utmost difficulty to keep his treacherous legal heart from resting on his duties, frames, graces, attainments as a ground of acceptance before God; and a sense of this makes him mourn before the Lord as much, if not more, than for his other failings and infirmities. And therefore you who know nothing of this na-

tural bent of your hearts towards the law as a covenant; and you who do not know what it is to watch, and pray, and wrestle against this bias of your hearts; it says that you are yet within the confines of mount Sinai, not as yet come to mount Zion.

3. When you are under any distress, or trouble of conscience, to what quarter do you run for comfort and relief? what is it that affords you ease? The man that is married to the law, runs to his husband for relief: I mean, he plies the oar of his own obedience; he heals his wound with a plaster of vows, tears, penances, and endeavours after amendment. But, sirs, you that heal the wounds of conscience with such a plaster, are yet at "mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage." The true believer, who is "come to mount Zion," when an arrow from mount Sinai smites and wounds him, does not run to Sinai, but "to mount Zion, to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." No balm but that of Gilead will heal his wound; he cannot find ease, but only under the wings of "the Sun of righteousness."

4. You who can be troubled for gross sins and out-breakings, but were never affected with, or afflicted for the guilt of Adam's sin, the corruption of your nature, the heinous nature of the sin of unbelief, I suspect you never saw the law in its spirituality; and, consequently are not dead to it as a covenant. There are two things that are more heavy to a believer, who is "come to mount Zion," than any other thing whatsoever; namely, original sin and the sin of unbelief: these, oh these, are the things that make him many times go with a bowed down back, crying, "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death!"

5. What is it that sets you at work in the mortification of sin? for the legalist may set himself to mortify sin, as well as the true believer; but here lies the odds: they are actuated from different principles. The legalist mortifies sin, and opposes it merely out of self-love; that he may be kept out of hell, or procure a title to heaven: but the true believer is principally actuated by a principle of love to Christ; he looks on him whom he has pierced, and this fires him with resentment; so that he studies to avenge Christ's quarrel by piercing the heart of his most beloved lusts and idols. The man has a love to Christ, a desire to glorify God, and to maintain fellowship and communion with him: these are the principal things that constrain him to duty, and restrain him from sin. And, therefore, turn inward, and see whether self-love, or love to Christ, have the principal influence in your

obedience. I do not deny but a desire after the enjoyment of God in glory, and the eternal happiness of the soul, may and actually do influence the soul to obedience in a secondary way; but beyond doubt the love of Christ, and the glory of God, is the ultimate and principal spring of obedience.

6. If you do not see so much weakness and corruption, so much deadness and distraction, attending your best duties, as to convince you of the absolute need of the blood of Jesus, and of his merit and mediation, to render both you and them acceptable to God, it is an evidence that you are not yet come off from mount Sinai law as a covenant. The poor believer, when he has won to the greatest enlargement in duty, and to the best frame that he can desire, yet he will be ready to cry out, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand?" He sees himself to be an *unprofitable servant*, and that "his goodness extends not to the Lord."

7. If you be more concerned to appear well in the externals of religion, than in an acquaintance with the inward power of it, it is an evidence that you are yet upon a law-bottom, like those who cry, "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Wherefore have we fasted, and prayed, and thou takest no knowledge?" But the believer, who is come to mount Zion, although he will not neglect the external duties of religion, yet his particular concern is to grow in internal holiness, and in conformity of heart and life to the Son of God, "to have the same mind in him, which was also in Christ Jesus." He longs to know more of *the power of his resurrection*, of the virtue of his sin-killing blood, and the efficacy of his Spirit, lifting him up after "things that are above, where Christ is at the right hand of God; and if he can win at this, he is the less careful about the flourishes of a profession, which is all that the hypocrite and legalist aim at, although in the mean time he will "flourish like the palm tree, and grow like the cedars in Lebanon."

8. You who have your hearts filled with enmity and prejudice against the children of grace, "the heirs of the promise," and cannot endure strict and holy walking with God, but are ready to envy those who you think outshine you, and have your hearts filled with inward rancour and prejudice against them, or perhaps mock and persecute them, either with heart, tongue, or hand, it is an evidence that you are yet in the confines of Sinai, among the children of the bondwoman. Gal. iv. 29: "But as then he that was born after

the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." A persecuting spirit, or a spirit of rancour and envy against those whom we think more holy than ourselves, and whom we fancy darken us, is a plain evidence of a legal spirit. They that are of a truly gospel-spirit, are ready to love the society of saints, whom they think excel themselves; and the more holy they are, the better they love them; the more of the image of God is on them, or in them, the more desirable will they be to them.

9. If you be come off from mount Sinai to mount Zion, from the law to the gospel-covenant, then those things which once you accounted gain, will be but loss in your reckoning. So soon as Paul was brought off from the law, to be a partaker of gospel-grace, *what things were gain to him, those he counted loss for Christ*, Phil. iii. 7. What those things are the legalist accounts gain, which the believer reckons loss for Christ, you have an account of Phil. iii. 4—6, which you may read and consider at your leisure. So much for trial. I should now go on to other uses, but I proceed no farther at present.

THE LAW OF FAITH ISSUING FORTH FROM MOUNT ZION.

The law shall go out of Zion.—ISA. II. 3.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.—ROM. III. 27.

THE THIRD SERMON ON THIS SUBJECT.

SOME of you may remember, that I have discoursed several times from the first of these texts, and made some considerable progress in prosecuting the following doctrine from it, *That the gospel is a law of sovereign grace issued forth from Zion for the behoof of lost sinners, lying under sentence of death, by virtue of a violated and broken law of works.*

Here I endeavoured,

I. To offer some remarks upon the gospel, as it is here called a *law coming out of Zion.*

II. Showed why it is called a *law.*

III. I attempted to publish some of these laws of sovereign grace from this high place of the city of God.

IV. I endeavoured to speak of the excellency of the law of grace coming out of Zion.

V. To inquire into the differences and agreement betwixt the law coming out of Zion, and the law coming out of Sinai, Ignorance of the differences betwixt these two, and of the connexion and subordination of the one to the other, makes confused work both in our preaching who are ministers, and in your practising who are the people.

VI. I endeavoured to make some application, by way of inference, confutation, and trial.

I have now subjoined another text, which I hope may contribute to illustrate farther what I have been insisting upon from the former; to wit, Rom. iii. 27: *Where is boasting*, &c! Where we may notice, (1.) The nature of that law which comes out of Zion; it is called the law of faith." All our interpreters are agreed that it is the gospel which is here called "the law of faith" by the apostle; for it is opposed to the law that enjoins works of obedience in the text. The gospel is the great instrument of faith; it reveals the object of faith; it is the proper boundary of faith, as the moral law is the boundary of manners or practice. (2.) We have the design or tendency of the gospel, or law of faith; it *excludes boasting*. Man was at first ruined by the sin of pride: *Ye shall be as gods*, was the grand bait that took with our first parents. Now, infinite wisdom has laid the plan of our salvation in a direct opposition to that evil of pride; he will have man saved in a way of self-abasement; and the gospel, or law of faith, is the great engine Infinite Wisdom makes use of for battering down these lofty imaginations of self-righteousness, that exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ. The gospel excludes boasting, "no flesh *may* glory in his presence; *but* he that glorieth *may* glory in the Lord." (3.) We have the opposition stated between the law of works and the law of faith; the law of works admits of *boasting*, but the law of faith *excludes it*. Whatever law it be, whether moral, ceremonial, or judicial, that requires works of righteousness to be done by us, in order to found our title to life, or acceptance before God, it is opposed to the law of faith; because the law of faith shuts out all manner of works in the business of a sinner's justification, and will not admit of any, even of the least ground of boasting in the creature; whereas, "if any man be justified *or* saved by works, he hath whereof to glory."

Thus, having grafted this text upon the former, I shall cast the doctrine into another mould, and you may take it as follows:—

Doct. "The gospel, which is the law of faith issued out from mount Zion, is calculated, by Infinite Wisdom for aba-

sing self, and advancing the sovereignty and freedom of the grace of God in the salvation of sinners. *Where is boasting? It is excluded by the law of faith.*"

Having spoken much already concerning the law coming forth from Zion; all I shall do at present, shall only be to confirm and apply this great truth.

1. For *Confirmation* there are two things I shall take a view of. 1. Of the doctrine of faith. 2. Of the grace of faith. And from thence it will appear that Infinite Wisdom has so adjusted matters, as to cast down every thing that stands in the way of the exaltation of sovereign grace in the salvation of the sinner.

Only, before I proceed, allow me to premise, that although the law as a covenant, or abstractly considered, admits of boasting, upon a supposition that we could fulfil it; yet as it stands in our Bible, in a subserviency to the great ends of the gospel, even considered as a covenant, it is *a schoolmaster to lead us* out of ourselves *into Christ*, who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Since the fall of Adam, the law was never given to man, that he should stay in the law, or in the works thereof, as the ground of his acceptance or salvation. Perhaps you may think this strange, yet it is a certain truth, if the scriptures be the word of God, the law is weak for the justification and salvation of a sinner; yea, "it is added because of transgressions," to discover sin, that sinners may flee to another quarter for relief than the law, even to Christ, in whom it has its end and accomplishment. So that, I say, even the law, as it stands in a subserviency to a gospel dispensation, is designed of God for stopping the mouths of sinners, "that no flesh should glory in his presence." But that which I have principally in view at present is, *first*, to let you see that the gospel, or the law of faith, excludes boasting in the creature, or that it is calculated for abasing self, and exalting the freedom of grace in the salvation of sinners. This will appear,

1. From gospel declarations or testimonies: Eph. ii. 8: "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:" ver. 9: "Not of works, lest any man should boast," &c. Where you see that self is stripped of every thing that might afford matter of boasting, and the whole glory of our salvation ascribed to grace, and to grace only. What is the first gospel-lesson that Christ the great gospel prophet teaches his scholars? It is just this: "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself:" that is, he must renounce his own wisdom, his own righteousness, holiness, and every thing on which he laid the stress of his

salvation, or the ground of his hope, and be content to lie down at the foot of sovereign grace, as "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked," to receive all in a way of free grace. This lesson the apostle Paul learned well, Phil. iii. 7, 8: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," &c. We find him every where renouncing self and giving the glory of all to free grace. Whatever he was, he owed it not to himself, but to grace. "By grace I am what I am;" whatever he did, he gives the glory of it to grace: "Not I, but the grace of God in me."

2. This is evident from gospel interrogations or questions, which are of such a nature as to stop the mouth of all flesh from boasting. You have two or three of them in the very words of my text; *Where is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.* You have the like train of silencing questions, 1 Cor. iv. 7: "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" It is a vain spirit that glories in borrowed robes.

3. This is evident from the gospel way of reckoning. It is a strange way the apostle directs us to, Rom. vi. 11: "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God through Jesus Christ." A believer must never reckon upon what he is, has, or has done; but he must reckon upon what he is, has, or has done, in his glorious Head and Surety. When he looks to himself, he reckons that he is a *dead* man, dead in law, *condemned already*, under sentence of death, and spiritually dead under the power of sin; but, on the other hand, he must reckon himself "alive unto God, through Jesus Christ." Thus, the apostle reckons, and teaches us to reckon also, Col. iii. 3: "Ye are dead, *but* your life is hid with Christ in God;" so, Gal. ii. 20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." As if he had said, *I live;* what is this I am saying? I have mistaken my reckoning, I am reckoning wrong when I say that *I live;* for it is "not I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." So let us see how they reckon upon the head of righteousness. Paul was, "touching the law, blameless," before his conversion; and after his conversion, "he knew nothing by himself," or he knew nothing in which his conscience condemned him; but does he look on this as the ground of his acceptance before God? No, "I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified:" he reckons all his righteousness before and after his conversion, but σκυβαλα

dogs' meat, the vilest of things, "that he might be found in Christ," not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ," &c. See the gospel reckoning on the score of righteousness, Is. xlv. 24: "Surely, shall one say, In the Lord," not in myself, "have I righteousness."—Again; how do they reckon upon the point of strength? O, says Paul, "I am not sufficient of myself to think any thing as of myself; but my sufficiency is of the Lord;" but, though I be not sufficient for any thing in and of myself, yet "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. Surely, in the Lord, shall one say, have I righteousness and strength." Christ is the fountain of their strength, and they reckon themselves strong, not in their own, but "in the power of his might." Thus, you see that the whole tendency of the gospel way of reckoning is always to carry the creature out of itself, that it may not glory in itself, but in the Lord, and in his free grace.

4. Let us take a view of the gospel-doctrines, and we shall find they are all levelled for this glorious end of sinking self, and exalting the freedom of the grace of God through Christ in the salvation of sinners. There we are taught that man has ruined himself, but his recovery is only by grace, Hos. xiii. 9: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help." *Where is boasting then? It is excluded by the law of faith.* In the gospel we have the doctrine of regeneration or effectual calling. Well, what interest has the man in his own regeneration? Even as little as the infant has in its formation in its mother's belly; John i. 13: "We are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Grace, and not self, must have the glory of that. Again; there is the doctrine of justification; how admirably is that laid for abasing self, and all our works of righteousness, that grace may have the glory! "We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." Then, there is the doctrine of our adoption and sonship. Do we put ourselves among the children? No, it is grace that does it; it is "he *that* gives us power, right, *or* privilege to become the sons of God.—Behold, what manner of love is this, that the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Then, for the doctrine of sanctification. Do we wash and cleanse ourselves? No, it is grace that does it, it is "the beauty of the Lord our God; we are beautiful through the comeliness he puts upon us." And, for the doctrine of perseverance, or standing in a state of grace: do we keep ourselves in that state? No, not we; but it is "he *that* keeps us by his power through faith unto salvation." In a word, the whole of the gospel doctrine

is ever levelled for this end to beat down self, "that he who glorieth, may glory in the Lord."

5. Let us consider the tendency of gospel parables. Christ was a parabolical preacher, he commonly taught by similitudes, many of which, if not all, if duly considered, are always to lead sinners out of themselves. To instance only in two or three: we read, Luke xv. of the parable of the prodigal son. What is the scope of it, but to let sinners see they are a set of poor bankrupts, that have squandered away all the stock they received in the first Adam, that so they may have recourse to the mercy and grace of God in Christ? We read of the parable of the Pharisee and publican, how the one boasted of his good deeds, and the other stood afar off trembling under a sense of sin, looking to the mercy of God in Christ, and "he went home to his house justified rather than the other." Again; we have the parable of the wise and foolish virgins: what is the design in that, but that sinners may not rest themselves satisfied with any thing of their own, be it a profession, or any seeming grace in themselves, but that they may go to the market of grace to buy that oil, which is in the dwellings of the wise, which alone will make acceptable at the coming of the great Bridegroom? Again, to add one more, we have the parable of the wise merchant; the scope of which is, to lead sinners out of themselves, for they must *sell all*, that they may *buy the pearl;* they must renounce themselves, and all their good qualifications, and betake themselves to the free grace of God in Christ.

6. I might clear this by the tenor of the gospel covenant and promises, the new covenant by which we are saved. What sort of a covenant is it? It is a covenant of grace; that is, a covenant calculated for abasing self, and exalting the freedom of the grace of God in the sinner's salvation. The covenant itself is not a covenant of our making, but of God's making. Indeed, we read of covenants made by men in scripture, Psal. l. 5: "Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." Israel entered into covenant with the Lord. But those covenants that are made by us, are only engagements to duty in the strength of that grace that is promised in the covenant of grace, which is not of our making, but of God's making: "I will make with you an everlasting covenant: I have made a covenant with my chosen: I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David," and the like. Again; self is ready to creep in, and to make terms and conditions, and qualifications of our own, to interest us in this covenant, and the blessings of it: but this covenant is so framed by Infinite Wisdom, as to exclude all these, that no man may boast; for the promises of it are so

framed, as every thing is freely bestowed without regard either to any good or ill in the creature. It runs in the form of a testamentary deed or gift, than which nothing can be conceived more free; "I will be their God; I will be merciful to their unrighteousness; I will see their ways, and heal them;" that is, I will do this and that of my own sovereign grace without regarding the creature's qualifications. This will farther appear—

7. If we consider the tenor of gospel calls and invitations to receive Christ, and to take hold of God's covenant of grace. Is the invitation or call to them that are so and so qualified? Is it to the righteous or holy? No; "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Is it to them that have money or price to recommend them? No, Is. lv. 1: "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." Is it to them that have their stock to the fore? No, it is to those that are debtors and bankrupts: "Thou art wretched, miserable, poor, and naked; *therefore* I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire:" it is to the blind, the maim, the halt, the wretched; and, in a word, it is to every creature under heaven, if it be on this side of hell. Thus, you see that the law of faith or gospel is calculated for debasing self, and for exalting the freedom of the grace of God in the salvation of sinners through Christ.

Secondly, As the gospel or law of faith, so the grace of faith is calculated for taking the sinner off his own bottom and exalting the freedom of the grace of God in our salvation. Now, the aptitude of the grace of faith for preventing boasting in the creature, and exalting the freedom of grace, will appear by the following particulars:—

1. Faith is a mere receiving or taking grace; so we find it expressed in John i. 12; Col. ii. 6; Rev. xxii. 17. This constitutes the very soul and essence of faith, to take or receive all, but give nothing. All other graces of the Spirit give something to God. Love gives him a warm and glowing heart; repentance a melting and bleeding heart; obedience a working hand; patience a broad back for bearing burdens; fear a trembling heart: but, as for faith, it is of such a beggarly nature, that it does not come to give, but to get, or take all from the Lord; hence it is called "an opening of the mouth to be filled." The whole of our salvation, as it lies in a covenant of grace, from first to last, is a mere gift of sovereign grace: "I will give grace and glory, and my Son for a covenant to the people," and in him the new heart and new spirit, peace and pardon, and all "the sure mercies of David."

Now, what grace could be so fit for the purpose of God in the salvation of sinners by this covenant as faith, which is a mere recipient? You know a liberal giver wants only a receiver. Now, such a thing is faith; it just receives or takes in what God gives in his bounty to man in the covenant of grace. I think it is remarkable what is said of Lydia, when she believed at the hearing of Paul's sermon, Acts xvi. 14: "God opened her heart to attend unto the things which were spoken of Paul." In the original, it is, "God opened her heart to take them to her," namely, the things which Paul spake, God opened her heart to take them in, or to receive them, Acts xxvi. 18: "That they may receive remission of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Now, if faith be nothing else but a receiving, *where is boasting? It is excluded by the grace of faith*, as well as the gospel, which is *the law of faith.*

2. As faith is a mere receiver, so it will receive nothing but what comes out of the hand of free grace. If you offer any thing to faith in a way of debt, or as a reward due to itself, it will shake its hands from holding any such bribe, and cry, Away with any thing that savours of debt, it is none of mine. Faith will trade at no market but that of grace, where no money passes, and where no price or bartering is in fashion; hence it is said to "buy without money, and without price," Is. lv. 1. Hence it is that faith and works are opposed to one another in scripture, particularly Rom. iv. 5: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly," &c. Works claim privileges in a way of debt, but faith on the score of grace, and refuses to have them another way; yea, so averse is faith from the merit of works, that it refuses to be reckoned among the category of acts of obedience in the matter of justification, so that it excludes its own act; for it is not by the act, but the object of faith that we are justified: *Where is boasting then?* Surely *it is excluded by the law* and grace *of faith.*

3. This will farther appear, if we consider, that faith will receive nothing but as it lies in a word of grace, a promise, a covenant, or offer of grace. This is the very genius of faith, that it intermeddles with the blessings and privileges which it receives, only on the warrant of God's word of grace, in which he has gifted or granted them to us, as it is well worded in our confession; faith receives and applies Christ and his salvation, by virtue of a covenant of grace. And in this lies one main difference between presumption and saving faith, that presumptuous faith gripes at the gift of grace, but not by virtue of a covenant of grace; it will take nothing without the command of God as its warrant, or his promise as its encourage-

ment; and having these two in its eye, it is sure it cannot be guilty of vicious intromission. Let faith once fix on the promise of God, and let it see God commanding it to receive the promise, and thing promised, then it will triumph and say, "God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice; Gilead is mine," God is mine, Christ is mine, the Spirit is mine, peace is mine, pardon and glory are mine, because "God hath spoken in his holiness; and this is all my salvation." Thus, I say, faith goes upon the ground of the promise; it knows no other law but the law of faith; and therefore it must needs exclude boasting, and be calculated only for advancing the freedom of grace.

4. This will yet farther appear, if we consider that faith has no will of its own, but only the will of sovereign grace. As it is said of the marigold, that it opens and shuts with the sun, and turns itself round with it, holding an exact correspondence with it; so does the grace of faith hold an exact correspondence with God's will of grace in the word, or covenant of grace. As the human nature of Christ united to the divine, did not act as a distinct person, and had not a will of its own separate from the divine, but was wholly resolved into the will of the divine nature; so faith has no will but God's will of grace: God's will of grace is the will of faith, and faith is the echo of the will of grace intimated in the word. Says grace, "I will be their God, I am the Lord thy God;" Amen, says faith, and that is my will too. "I will heal their backslidings," says grace: Even so be it, that is my will too, says faith. "I will sprinkle them, and cleanse them from all their filthiness, and from all their idols:" Amen, says faith, that is my will too. "This is the will of a God of grace, even our sanctification;" O, says faith, that is just what I will too. Thus, you see that it is calculated merely for advancing God's will of grace, consequently for excluding boasting.

5. Faith will address no throne but a throne of grace. Bring faith to a throne of justice, it "stands afar off, smites on the breast," and cries, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand?" and, therefore, "God, have mercy on me a sinner; for in thy sight no living can be justified." Faith has no work or business at a throne of justice. But bring faith within view of a throne of grace, which has justice satisfied, and judgment executed on the Son of God for its basis and foundation, and then it will gather spirits and courage, saying, Heb. iv. 16, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Heb. x. 19, 20, &c. "Having, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the

blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, &c. let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." Now, seeing it does not deal with a tribunal of justice, but only with a mercy-seat, it follows that faith excludes boasting in the creature, and is levelled for the exaltation of grace only.

6. Faith will have no praise or glory to itself, but gives all the glory to grace, and to grace alone. We are told that God will not give his glory to another; and yet we find him giving his glory to the grace of faith. Sometimes we find him giving it the glory of his omnipotence; "To him who believeth all things are possible;" and faith will speak like a little omnipotent: "I can do all things." Sometimes we find him giving it the glory of the forgiving and pardoning of sin, which is his alone prerogative: we "receive the remission of sins through faith in his blood." The cleansing of the heart is God's prerogative, and yet it is ascribed to faith, Acts xv. 9: "purifying their hearts by faith." Now, why, think you, will God set his own crown upon the head of the grace of faith, which he will not do to men or angels, or any creature whatsoever? Why, the plain reason is, because faith is such an honest self-denied kind of thing, that it will have no glory to itself, but turns all back again upon the grace of God; saying, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory." Whatever a man does by faith, he will be far from boasting in himself, or grace received; it pays the rent of praise full tale to the grace of God alone, without keeping back the least mite, as Ananias and Sapphira did, and as all hypocrites do. It is true, will faith say, "I can do all things;" but it is "through Christ strengthening me." It is true, I have a perfect righteousness; but it is "in the Lord, surely, that I have righteousness; in him will I be justified, and in him will I glory." It is true, I purify the heart; but it is by the Spirit and blood of Jesus that I do it. I have forgiveness; but it is *in his blood.* I have a title to a reward of glory; but not as a reward of my labour, but as the travail of Christ's soul: the reward is a debt due to him, and not to me. I am *an heir of God;* but it is by being *a joint heir with Christ.* Thus, then, you see, that the grace of faith, as well as the doctrine or law of faith, is calculated for abasing self, and advancing the glory of the grace of God in the salvation of sinners; and therefore we may, on the whole, well say with the apostle in the text, *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.*

II. The next thing in the method was the *Application.* And the *first* use shall be for *Information* in the following particulars:—

1. Then, See from this doctrine, that boasters are none of

God's favourites, whatever they may think of themselves; why, boasting is excluded by the gospel. Yea, so far are they from being the favourites, that if we consult the records of scripture, we shall find that all along he has had a particular pique and quarrel with them, Is. ii. 12: "The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low." Pharaoh was a proud boaster: "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: Who is the Lord that I should obey him?" But what comes of his boasting? He is made to sink like lead, and his whole army, in the mighty waters. So Sennacherib makes his boast: "By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel." So Nebuchadnezzar: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" But how remarkably those mighty boasters were abased and brought down, the sacred story records: the army of one overthrown by an angel of God, and the other herded among the beasts of the field. Herod is proud of his fine oration, and receives the applause of the people ("It is the voice of a god, and not of a man,") without giving them any check; therefore the angel of the Lord smites him, and he is eaten of worms. Hezekiah makes his boast of his treasures and precious things to the king of Babylon's ambassadors, sent to congratulate his recovery; and therefore the Lord tells him, that his posterity and precious things should be carried captive to Babylon. David, through the pride of his heart, will have Joab to number the people, that he might have it to boast of, that he was King over so many thousands; and therefore the angel of the Lord is sent, who cuts off seventy thousand of Israel in three days' time, by a raging pestilence. But say you, Though God will not allow his people to boast of these external things, yet will he not allow them to boast of their graces, manifestations, and experiences? I answer, No, he will not allow them to boast of these, either. David gets a sweet visit from the Lord, and he begins to boast of it, Psal. xxx. 6, 7. Now, says he, "My mountain stands strong; I shall never be moved:" but the Lord soon gives him a check, as appears from the words immediately following, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." The apostle Paul was "wrapt up to the third heaven," and was in danger of pride, "through abundance of revelations:" but will the Lord countenance this? No, no: to hide pride and boasting from him, "a thorn in the flesh is sent, a messenger

of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be lifted up above measure." So that you see God is an enemy to all boasting: he allows of no boasting but boasting like that of David, "My soul shall make her boast in God;" or like that of Paul, "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?" &c. He allows the boasting of faith, but not of sense. And I am persuaded, that this is one great reason why the Lord's people are kept so long in the wilderness under desertion, temptation, and the like, and why he hides his face from them, because he sees that if they were lifted up with manifestations, they could not bear it.

2. See from this doctrine the excellency and necessity of this grace of faith. Why, it is by faith we answer the design of the gospel or law of faith. What in all the world can answer the law of faith, if it be not faith? The law of commandments must be answered by practice, and the law of faith by believing. Faith is such an excellent thing that it just embraces the whole revelation in the gospel, and says *amen* to it; it "sets to the seal, that God is true."

3. See hence the criminal nature of unbelief, which tramples both law and gospel. It tramples on the law of commandments, and the authority of the great Law-giver; for "this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23; and this his commandment he has fenced with an awful penalty, "He that believeth not is condemned already." Now, unbelief despises both the law and the penalty of it, and in effect says, with proud Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him?" And, as for the law of faith, or the gospel, and the promises of it, unbelief tramples on these also, and says God is not worthy of credit, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." O tremble at unbelief.

4. See, hence, whence it is that believers may have such boldness and assurance when they come before a throne of grace. Why, the man has law, even "the law of faith," on his side, and this gives him courage. You know, a man that has the law on his side, holds up his head in court, and looks with an air of courage, and will speak with boldness to the judge. Well, this is the case with the believer; he has the law of faith, the gospel, and all the promises of it, on his side, and he binds the Lord with his own laws and acts of grace, Heb. x. 22: "Let us draw near, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith;" and then, ver. 23, it is added, "For faithful is he that hath promised." God has enacted, that we shall have "access into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," that he will accept of us in the new and living way;" and there-

fore, "let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith."

5. See, hence, one great difference betwixt faith and presumption, betwixt a gospel and legal spirit. A legal, presumptuous spirit, is a boasting spirit; but a gospel-spirit, a spirit of true faith, is an humble, self-emptied spirit. The presumptuous legalist comes boasting, with the proud Pharisee, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men," &c.; but the true believer comes with lowliness of spirit, like the poor publican, building his hope only on the mercy of God, intimated in the gospel or law of faith, "he stands afar off, crying, God have mercy upon me a sinner." The language of the one is, Let self be exalted; but the language of the other is, O let grace, grace alone, be exalted through the blood of a Redeemer in my salvation: and that is one reason why believers are in scripture described *humble and poor*, because they are emptied of all boasting of themselves, and have submitted to the law of faith, by which boasting is excluded.

6. See, hence, how it is that some, yea, most believers, steal away to heaven without any great noise, the world knowing little about them. Why, they are no boasters; they do not, like the Pharisee, proclaim their goodness to the world; no, they are *hidden ones*, hid from the world, and hid from themselves; they see nothing but emptiness in themselves, and when they compare themselves with others, they think they are the greatest of sinners, and the least of all saints. The law of faith, which they are under, excludes boasting; it is calculated for levelling the pride of the heart, and exalting the freedom of grace only.

7. See, hence, that self, in all the branches of it, is diametrically opposite to the spirit of the gospel; why, the law of faith is calculated for levelling self. It was not without reason, that Christ has told us, "If any man will be his disciple, he must deny himself." We must deny our own reason; carnal reason cannot know, it "cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God." We must deny our own will, and yield to the will of grace revealed in the gospel, or "law of faith." We must deny our own righteousness, and submit unto the righteousness of Christ. And, oh! how hard a pull is it to bring the sinner to deny these three branches of self! Yet they must be denied; otherwise we cannot be disciples of Christ.

8. See hence, what judgment we are to form of a proud spirit. Let a man's parts and endowments be ever so bright, yet if he be proud of them, he wants the true spirit of the

gospel; and in so far he is under the law of works, which admits boasting in the creature.

9. See that humility is a glorious gospel-ornament, a self-denied spirit: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. Though God be high, yet hath he a respect unto the lowly." The richest wines of the gospel consolation are laid up in the lowest heart: "He giveth grace to the humble," &c.

10. See, hence, the difference betwixt gospel and legal preaching, and what it is that makes an able minister of the New Testament, namely, to rid marches well betwixt the law of works and the law of faith; to level at the beating down of self, and the exalting of the freedom of grace in the salvation of sinners through Christ; to be a faithful herald in proclaiming and intimating the law of faith, and the whole counsel of God respecting salvation.

Use *second* is of *Exhortation*. Has God issued out a law of grace from mount Zion, for the benefit of lost sinners sinking under the curse of the law of works? and is this law so calculated by Infinite Wisdom for abasing self, and exalting the freedom of grace in the salvation of sinners? O then, for the Lord's sake, and for your own soul's sake, let me call all hearing me to come away from mount Sinai to mount Zion; come away from the law of works, which condemns the whole race of Adam in bulk, and receive the law of faith; take the benefit of these acts and edicts of grace that are admitted in the gospel from a throne of grace. Sirs, it is ordinary for kings, when they enact laws at court, showing the duty, or establishing the interest and privilege of the subject, to send their heralds to intimate and proclaim them in the public places of concourse, that none may pretend ignorance; but when they have done so, they leave it to every man to take the benefit of the law or not, as he has a mind. But the great King, whose name is *gracious and merciful*, not only orders us to intimate and proclaim the beneficial laws of sovereign grace, but he has given us express orders to urge and compel you to come in," and take the benefit of his acts of grace. And therefore, that I may act according to my commission from the Lord, I must be allowed to make use of some few arguments to engage your compliance with my exhortation. O sirs, quit and renounce the law of works, and take the benefit of the law of faith.

Motive 1. Shall be drawn from the consideration of the evil and danger of cleaving to mount Sinai-law for righteousness. And this will appear, if you consider,

1*st*. That, since the fall of Adam, the mount Sinai-law never brought righteousness or life to any of his posterity; no,

no, "the law is weak through the flesh," says the apostle, Rom. viii. 3: it is strong to condemn the sinner; but, through the corruption of nature, and our weakness to obey, it is become weak and insufficient to give life to us. The apostle tells us Gal. iii. 21, that "if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law:" where he plainly supposes, that no commanding law since the fall can possibly give life or righteousness to man; yea, so far is the law of commandments incapable to give life, that it sends the whole family of Adam to hell together: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

2*dly*, This law of works or commandments requires and exacts of you what is impossible as a term or condition of life, and that is perfect or sinless obedience. 'No mere man since the fall is able perfectly to keep the commandments of God;' and yet this law will not abate one ace; it "requires brick, but gives no straw;" it requires obedience, but gives no strength; yea, it exacts as much service and obedience of a sick man, as though he were perfectly sound, of fallen man, as though he was in his primitive integrity. It is a common foolish notion of many ignorant people, that if they yield sincere obedience, and do as well as they can in obedience to the commandments of God, God will accept of that in the room of that perfect righteousness which the law required in innocence. But beware of hazarding your souls upon such a damnable delusion; for the law of God must have not only a sincere, but perfect and sinless obedience, or nothing; if you do not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them, the curse of the law takes place. Indeed, sincere obedience is admitted as a return of gratitude to God upon the soul's closing with, and submitting to, the perfect righteousness of Christ, but not as a ground of acceptance before God, either in part or whole: and if you but imagine in your heart, that your own imperfect obedience, though ever so sincere, will be a ground of acceptance, or a title to life, either in part or whole, you "become a debtor to do the whole law," Gal. v. 3.

3*dly*, So long as you cleave to the law as a covenant, there is a *hand-writing* standing against you before God uncancelled, the justice of God has a bond over your head: "The sin of Judah is written before him as with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond." This hand-writing is never cancelled till you believe in Christ, and submit to his righteousness; no, no, you are "condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on you." But at that moment you quit the law as a covenant, and take the benefit of the gospel, or law of

grace, the "Surety of the better testament" comes in betwixt you and all obligations the law has upon you; and then "there is no more condemnation." Who can lay any thing to your charge?

4*thly*, While you are within the confines of mount Sinai-law, a lowering cloud pregnant with wrath hangs over your head, which will infallibly dissolve in a tempest of wrath, to the everlasting ruin of your souls, unless you make your escape to mount Zion, and take the benefit of the law of grace: "Snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of your cup." Perhaps you may be crying, *Peace, peace*: but what will that avail, seeing God says otherwise, "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked?"

5*thly*, It is no wonder though God have a controversy with you, while you cleave to the law of works; for while you do so, you are running directly cross to God in the greatest design ever he had in hand, which is the glorious work of redemption through Jesus Christ: Gal. ii. 21: "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain." The opening up "a new and living way to the holiest by the blood of Jesus," is the chief of the ways of God, the very master piece of Infinite Wisdom: but now while you cleave to the law, and seek righteousness by it, you are running counter to God's design of grace, doing what in you lies to condemn and shut up that "new and living way which God has opened, and to frustrate the design of the incarnation and death of the eternal Son of God: Gal. v. 4: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

6*thly*, To cleave to mount Sinai-law, in point of righteousness, is the greatest folly and madness in the world; why, because the law of works, or the law covenant, is broken, and can serve you in no stead for salvation; yea the breach of it was intended by Infinite Wisdom as an inlet to the law of faith, or the gospel method of salvation by Christ, and his everlasting righteousness. I was hinting formerly, that since the fall of man, the law was never given, that man might stay in it as a ground of hope, but that by it he might be carried beyond the law to Christ, who is "the end of the law for righteousness." And now I shall adventure to say more, That when God gave the law to Adam in innocence, in the form of a covenant, he never designed that man's happiness should stand upon that footing; no, the covenant of works was only designed as a scaffold for rearing up a more glorious building of grace and mercy, which God has said "shall be built up for ever," Psal. lxxxix. 2. Now, what strange

madness is it for a man to keep by the scaffold, when the fabric for which it was erected is complete and finished! O sirs, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars;" her house is finished, provided, and accommodated with every thing needful for the sinner's salvation. Why then will you stay longer upon the broken scaffold of the law, as though by it you could make your way to heaven? Christ is the only bridge of communication betwixt God and man; no Mediator but he, "no coming to the Father but by him." O then do not adventure to pass the gulf upon the broken shreds and planks of your own lame righteousness by the works of the law, lest you go to the bottom: "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse," Gal. iii. 10. O will you choose rather to risk the salvation of your souls for ever, than venture on the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, the alone "foundation God hath laid in Zion?" For the Lord's sake, then, take care what you do.

Mot. 2. To persuade you to quit the law of works, the mount Sinai-law as a covenant, and to fall in with the law of faith, I mean, to take the benefit of the glorious gospel, and the promises of it, will you but consider what advantageous discoveries the gospel makes to the miserable sinner: it discovers and presents to him whatever he needs or wants in that miserable situation he is reduced to by the fall.

1*st*, O sinner, thou wantest a ransom unto justice, that thou mayst not go down to the pit. Well, here it is, Christ is the ransom; "He gave himself a ransom for many;" and he is *set forth*, in the gospel, "as a propitiation through faith in his blood." Tell me, sirs, you that cleave to the law of works, can the law afford you this? No, by no means, Rom. viii. 3. All your doings will not do the business, yea, though you were but guilty of one sinful thought in your whole life, that one flaw in your obedience renders the law weak to save you, and is like a dead fly, which makes all your obedience to stink; and will ever such a stinking obedience be a ransom for a soul? Nothing can be a ransom for a guilty soul but blood: "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin:" Blood, blood is the demand of justice, either the blood of the sinner, or of the Surety, and no less blood than the blood of an infinite person can be admitted. Now, the gospel, I say, discovers and presents this ransoming and atoning blood, by which all the demands of justice are answered to the full.

2*dly*, Art thou in a starving condition, like to drop down for want of soul-food, like the poor prodigal, who, in a far country, was perishing for want, attempting to fill thy belly

with husks of carnal comforts, or of legal duties, but still findest thy soul empty? Well, the gospel casts up a banqueting-house, where thou mayest "eat that which is good, and delight thyself with abundance of fatness," Is. lv. 2. To this purpose is that, Is. xxv. 6: "In this mountain," namely mount Zion, or the gospel church, "shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. Wisdom hath *not only* builded her house, *but* she hath mingled her wine, killed her fatlings, and made all things ready." Christ, the bread of life, is ready for the starving sinner; no more but to take and eat, to receive and apply him, and his whole fulness. O then take the benefit of the law of faith; fall in with the gospel call and invitation.

3*dly*, O sinner, there is a loathsome disease that cleaves fast to thee, thou art "full of wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores, from the crown of the head even to the sole of the foot, which have not been bound up, nor mollified with ointment." Well, the gospel tells thee, that there is "balm in Gilead, and a physician there," whose name is JEHOVAH ROPHI, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." O sirs, Christ is the sinner's Saviour, the sinner's physician; and every sinner has as good right to come to him, as such, as ever a wounded or sick man in a regiment had to call for the help of the physician or chirurgeon of that regiment; the very office of a physician obliges him to serve the sick. Now, Christ being a physician by office, warrants the lost sinner to come to him with his dying, diseased soul; and, beyond peradventure, whoever comes to him, he will not, not, not cast him out.

4*thly*, O sinner, thou art polluted and defiled "among the pots," spotted like the leopard, black like the Ethiopian. Well, the gospel discovers "a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness." O come and wash in this fountain, in the Jordan of a Redeemer's blood: and "though ye have lien among the pots, ye shall be like the wings of a dove." Do not say you have no right to come to the fountain, for you have God's command to wash, to "make you clean," Is. i. 16. He has promised to "sprinkle you with clean water," Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

5*thly*, The gospel, or law of faith, presents thee with a robe to cover the "shame of thy nakedness," even the best robe that heaven can afford: Rev. iii. 18: "I counsel thee to buy of me white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." Suppose you were stripped naked, going from door to door, seeking a rag to cover you, if one should present you with clothes,

and put them upon you, would you not reckon yourself obliged to that person! Well, this is thy case: thy soul is naked before God; but here is "a robe of righteousness, and a garment of salvation," presented in the gospel, to cover thee, "Hearken unto me, ye that are stout-hearted, and far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off." The law of works is "a bed too short, a covering too narrow" for a sinner. Thy righteousness by the law is as filthy rags, and instead of a covering, does but deform and defile the soul; but here is a clothing, bright like the sun, Rev. xii. 1, and every one that puts it on by faith, "shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of the Father." Our first parents, whenever they found themselves naked, fell at work to sew fig-leaves together for aprons to cover their shame, until God provided them coats of skins, probably skins of the beasts offered in sacrifice, thereby teaching them, that their soul-nakedness was to be covered with the righteousness of Christ, our great atoning sacrifice: I say, whenever these coats of skins were provided for them, they threw away their fig-leaves as useless. This is the very case with the sinner; so soon as he falls under a conviction of his spiritual nakedness before God, he studies to sew together an apron of his own works. The harlot, Prov. vii. 14, pleads, that she "had peace-offerings with her; this day," says she, "have I paid my vows;" and with this apron she imagined to cover the filthiness of her adultery. But, alas! this will not do; for God says, "Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works," Is. lix. 6. Therefore, for the Lord's sake, cast away these fig-leaves, as useless, as dung and loss, seeing you are now called to accept of the white raiment of God's providing. Say with Paul, when Christ was discovered to him, "I count all but loss and dung, that I may be found in him." Paul, in this case, is just like a man swimming for his life upon a broken plank: so soon as ever he comes to a vessel that will carry him ashore, he quits his plank, and betakes himself to the whole and sound vessel; and so reckons himself in safety.

6*thly*, The gospel discovers or presents thee with a cooling, refreshing shadow, to defend thee from the heat of divine wrath. Perhaps some of you have been at the foot of Sinai, or at present are scorched with the flashes of divine wrath, cast out from that burning mountain. Well, here is mount Zion, take the benefit of the gospel, and thou shalt find the "shadow of a great rock," where the flames of vindictive wrath cannot reach thee: Cant. ii. 3: "I sat down," says the spouse, "under his shadow with great delight," &c. When the children of Israel travelled through the burning sands of

Arabia, they had no shelter from the scorching heat, but a miraculous cloud, with which God overshadowed the camp, for the space of forty years. I have read of some, who travelling through these sandy deserts, have dropped down dead with the heat of the sun: so that this cloud that covered the camp of Israel, was of absolute necessity to them, otherwise they could never have subsisted there, especially for such a long tract of time; it was not their thin tents that would defend them. This cloud typified the righteousness of Christ revealed in the gospel; this is the only covering under which a guilty sinner can be preserved from the "devouring fires and everlasting burnings" of divine wrath. It is not any thing done by you that will defend you, unless you get under "the shadow of this great rock in the weary land." The cloud that screened Israel from the beams of the sun, was itself exposed to the burning heat; so Christ exposed himself to the wrath of his Father, that he might be a lasting and perpetual shadow to protect us from it. As Israel did, for the space of forty years, travel under the shadow of the cloud; so, while we are travellers in this weary land, we must be journeying under the shadow of Christ, and his everlasting righteousness. If any of the children of Israel went out from the shadow of the cloud, they were in danger of being burnt up with excessive heat; so, if at any time a believer, through a remaining legal spirit, and an evil heart of unbelief, depart from Christ, seeking relief from the law, he is in danger of being scorched with mount Sinai flames, and never shall he find rest till by faith he return to the place where Christ "maketh his flocks to rest at noon."

7thly. The gospel discovers a city of refuge for the poor sinner, who is pursued by the law and justice of God. We read of cities of refuge under the law, that were a common good to the children of Israel, Num. xxxv. 15, 23, 24. If a man had killed his neighbour but by mere accident, without any design, yet he must not stay at his own house, expecting safety there, but he must with all speed flee to "the city of refuge," as the ordinance of God for his safety. This was a faint type and shadow of Christ, the blessed refuge and hope set before us in the gospel. The sinner being guilty of death, and the sword of justice being drawn and furbished, in order to be bathed in his blood, God cries to him from heaven to flee for his life to Christ, "Turn ye to your strong-hold, ye prisoners of hope.—Turn ye, turn ye: why will ye die, O house of Israel!" And as the manslayer, when within the gates of the city of refuge, could freely confer and talk with the avenger without fear of danger: so a God of vengeance and a guilty sinner may have sweet fellowship with one another in Christ;

for " by this better hope we draw nigh unto God," Heb. vii. 19. If the manslayer, during the life of the high priest, had come without the walls of the city of refuge, the avenger of blood might warrantably kill him; so if the best and holiest of saints should go forth out of Christ, and from under the covering of his blood and righteousness, imagining themselves to be in safety under the shelter of their own inherent holiness, God's avenging justice might warrantably cut them off; and therefore it is your wisdom to abide in Christ, 1 John ii. 28: "Little children, abide in him." Let us, with Paul, be concerned to be for ever found in him.

8*thly*, The gospel discovers a blessed stair, or ladder, by which we, who have fallen by our iniquities, may climb up to heaven, and have access to the holy of holies. If it were possible that a lost sinner could fly to heaven upon the wings of his own works, or get up thither by the broken ladder of the law of works, what need was there that God should provide such an expensive one, as that of the incarnation, obedience, and death of his own eternal Son? When Jacob Gen. xxviii. was travelling in Padan-aram, in a dream he saw a ladder, the foot of which stood upon earth, while the top of it reached the heavens. By this ladder was signified the person of Christ, as Immanuel, God-man, who, as to his human nature, stood upon earth, and, as to his divine nature, is above the height of the highest heavens; and likewise the office of Christ as Mediator, who joins heaven and earth together in a blessed amity and concord. The foot of this ladder stood in Bethel, *the house of God*, in the church. Christ revealed and exhibited in the gospel, is the lowest step of the ladder, and comes near to every man that he may set the foot of faith upon it, in order to his climbing up to glory. This ladder is "the gate of heaven: I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved. I am the way, and the truth, and the life: there is no way of coming unto the Father but by me." By faith in his atoning blood we enter into the holy of holies. At the death of Christ the veil was rent from the top to the bottom, and the way to the holiest laid open, that we, through the human nature of the Son of God, (which was rent in twain by justice,) might enter with boldness.

9*thly*, The gospel discovers a rich mine or treasure, by which you may be made up for ever, even " the unsearchable riches of Christ." If I should tell this company, that there is such a treasure of gold or silver hid in the highway betwixt this and the next town, and that every man might go and take as much of it as he had a mind, O what a strange run would there be among this multitude! But, sirs, though I cannot tell you of earthly riches, yet I can tell you of a field where

far better riches are to be found, even *gold tried in the fire*, better than the gold of Ophir, riches that do not rot in the grave; and the field is not far off, you have it in the Old and New Testament, which is among your hands, you have it in this gospel that you are hearing: Christ and all the fulness of the Godhead, Christ and everlasting life in him, is there. O *search the scriptures*, &c. Prov. ii. 4, 5: "He that seeketh it as silver, and searcheth for it, as for a hid treasure, shall understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Thus, you see what glorious and advantageous discoveries are made to sinners by the gospel, (the law of faith;) and therefore, for the Lord's sake, take the benefit of it.

Mot. 3. To engage you to take the benefit of the law of faith, by believing in Christ, pray consider, that the moral law, or law of commandments, upon the revelation of Christ in the gospel, binds and obliges you so to do. I do not say that the law of works reveals Christ; no, not one word of Christ is to be found in the whole law abstractly considered: but this I say, that whenever the gospel reveals Christ, the law wills, requires, and commands the sinner, under the severest penalty, to close with him. Will not the law lead to its end, and require the sinner to betake himself to him who is "the end of the law for righteousness," upon the revelation of him by the gospel? Yes, surely, "This is his commandment, that you believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ;" and, "he that believeth not is condemned already." But, say you, that is a command of the gospel, not of the law. I answer, It is a command of the law, yes, the very first commandment of the moral law: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" that is, thou shalt believe and trust in me as thy God and Redeemer, and in none other, for life and salvation. So that although the moral law abstractly considered does not reveal Christ or speak one word of him; yet considered in the concrete, or as it stands connected with, and subservient to, the gospel revelation, it enjoins, it requires, and commands us to take the benefit of Christ and his righteousness. And therefore, if you do not take the benefit of the law of faith, you break and violate even the law of works, by which you are seeking righteousness and salvation. You desire to "work the work of God;" well, "this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." And, do what you will in obedience to the law of works, it will all be rejected, like the "offering of swine's blood," except you obey this commandment of the law of works, which is to take the benefit of the *law of faith*, or to "believe on the name of the Son of God.

Mot. 4. Consider that there is a double vengeance attending them that do not take the benefit of the law of faith; and no

wonder, since (as you have heard) they despise a double law, namely, of works and of faith, at once; every and the least transgression even of the law of works incurs wrath and vengeance, death, and damnation, against the sinner. See how the apostle argues upon this head, Heb. x. 28, 29: "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy," &c. Now all this the man is guilty of, who does not by faith fall in with the revelation of the law of faith; he "crucifies the Son of God afresh," reacts and approves the tragedy acted on mount Calvary, he "tramples the blood of the covenant under foot, and does despite unto the Spirit of grace," who revealed the law of faith; and therefore a double vengeance must be abiding you, if you do not receive the law of faith. O unbelieving sinner, "consider this, lest he tear you in pieces, when none shall be able to deliver you out of his hand." But I do not incline to end with terrors; and therefore,

Mot. 5. Consider that moment you take the benefit of the law of faith (the gospel coming forth from Zion,) you are acquitted and discharged of all that ever the law of works could demand of you. The law of works craved only a single debt of Adam in innocency, namely, the debt of obedience; but it hath a double charge upon the sinner, not only of obedience to its precept, but also it craves its penalty be endured; and of this double debt you are not capable to pay the least farthing. Though you were to live Methuselah's days, you could never obey one precept of the law, as it is the law of works, being utterly destitute of that principle from which, and of the end to which, all acts of obedience to the law must be performed; for the holy law does not look so much to the matter of the action, as to the principle and end of it; so that our best actions, instead of being acts of obedience to the law, are but splendid sins before God the great Lawgiver; and therefore the debt of obedience to the precept you can never pay, while you cleave to the law as a covenant. And as you are not capable to pay the debt of obedience, so neither are you in your own person capable to pay the debt of punishment or satisfaction, though you were to lie in hell-fire through an endless eternity. The reason is, because justice requires an infinite satisfaction for an infinite offence; and can the punishment of a finite creature ever amount to an infinite satisfaction? Thus, you are insolvent debtors to justice, by virtue of the precept and penalty of the law of works. But now, I say, whenever you take the benefit of the law of faith, or believe in Christ as he is offered and gifted in the promise of the gospel, you are that moment assoilzied and acquitted from both these debts, and all charges that the law of works has against you: you are no more concerned with it

either in point of justification or condemnation: "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. Who can lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Perhaps, indeed, the devil may set home the law as a covenant upon the believer in Christ, craving the debt both of obedience and punishment for sin; but the believer, under the lively exercise of faith, has a ready answer to these charges. As for the debt of obedience, may the believer say, my Surety paid it by his spotless obedience; "he magnified the law and made it honourable, and JEHOVAH is well pleased for his righteousness' sake," and through him the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in me; so that, although now by strength derived from him, I resolve to honour and obey the law as a rule of obedience, from a principle of love and gratitude to my blessed Husband and Redeemer, yet as a covenant I owe it nothing: will I ever dishonour my glorious Surety so far, as to offer my own grace and holiness or obedience in the room of his everlasting law-biding righteousness? No, no; I am "dead to the law by the body of Christ, being married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that I may bring forth fruit unto God." And then, as for the debt of punishment and satisfaction, I owe the law of works nothing, either: why, its penalty was endured by my Kinsman and Redeemer, "he finished it upon the cross, he was wounded for *my* iniquities, the just suffered for the unjust," his blood answers for my offences, and his resurrection is my discharge for justification; "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for me;" and, therefore "who is he that condemneth," seeing upon this ground God does justify? It is remarkable, that the apostle puts a note of distinction on the resurrection of Christ, saying, "Yea rather, that is risen again," because the resurrection of Christ from the dead is an invincible proof of the full payment of the debt, which he as our Surety undertook to pay. If he had not made full payment, the prison of the grave had never been opened, and he dismissed, or "taken from prison and from judgment," Is. liii. 8. O sirs, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, our brother Joseph, our elder brother Jesus, his head is lifted up out of prison by a glorious resurrection and exaltation; and therefore let all the seed of Israel rejoice, for he having lifted up the head as a public person and representative, our heads are lifted up in him, and with him: Eph. ii. 5, 6: "Even when we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And therefore, O come and let us all return unto a God of

peace, who hath raised up Jesus Christ our Lord from the dead: "he hath torn him and he will heal us; he hath smitten him, and he will bind us up: after two days he revived us," who were dead in law, "in the third day he raised us up" in him; and therefore let us say, in a way of believing, "We shall live in his sight: Because Christ lives, ye shall live also." Sure I am, if we had but the lively up-taking of this mystery of a risen Christ, we would be ready to join the apostle in his doxology, 1 Pet. i. 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Mot. 6. By taking the benefit of the law of faith coming out of Zion, the law of commandments coming out of Sinai will be an easy yoke, and a light burden to you. The covenant of works was such "a yoke of bondage, that neither we nor our fathers were able to bear it;" this is spoken, Acts xv. 10, of the legal dispensation of the covenant of grace under the Old Testament, by types, ceremonies, and sacrifices, &c. But if even the legal dispensation of the covenant of grace was an unsupportable yoke; what must the covenant of works be? But now, I say, by faith's improvement of the gospel-law of grace, that heavy yoke is now become a light and easy burden. The reason is, whenever a sinner believes in Christ, by virtue of the gospel, or covenant of grace, the righteousness of the law, as a covenant is fulfilled in him, and he gets strength from Christ to obey the law as a rule. "Surely in the Lord, shall one say, have I righteousness and strength:" and faith, falling on this fund of righteousness and strength, cries with the psalmist, Psal. lxxi. 16: "I will go in the strength of the Lord God, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only." Now the man rejoices to work righteousness, remembering the Lord and his ways, his *steps* are *enlarged under* him, and his *feet* become as *hinds' feet* in the way of the Lord; so that he "runs and does not weary, he walks and does not faint:" the man, finding himself redeemed and delivered from the hands of his enemies, "serves the Lord without fear," without a servile or slavish fear, "in holiness and righteousness, all the days of *his* life:" with Paul, he "delights in the law of the Lord, after the inward man:" consenting to it, that it is "holy, just, and good; esteems it the "good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God;" makes it "a lamp to *his* feet, and a light to *his* paths;" and so he "goes on from strength to strength, until he appear before the Lord in Zion." Thus, I have endeavoured to deal with you as rational creatures, and to draw you with the bands of a man, to take the benefit of the law of faith coming forth from

mount Zion: look to the Lord, that he may, by the power of his Spirit, concur and make it effectual to persuade and enable you thereto.

I conclude all in a few words by way of direction or advice, in order to your improvement of the law of faith or the gospel of our salvation.

1. Study to be convinced and persuaded, that neither you nor any of the race of Adam, can make your way to heaven by the law of works. You may weary yourselves in the greatness of your way to bring it about, but all in vain. As I told you before, so I tell you again, that door is condemned, that bridge is broken, that scaffold is taken down: and in vain do you attempt to rebuild it; for God has said, and his word shall stand, "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified."

2. In order to your being convinced of this, I advise you to be much in studying the law of works, in its holiness, perfection, extent, and spirituality; for the reason why so many cleave to the law as a covenant is, because they know not the extent of the law: "I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment" says David, "is exceeding broad," Psal. cxix. 96. We may sooner take up the perfection of all created things, than take up the extent of this law, which reaches to the innermost motions of the heart, the first broodings of a sinful thought, as well as the external actions of the life. Some in our day do with the law of God, just as the old Pharisees did; they pare off the spirituality of the law, and look no farther than the letter of it; and hence they imagine that they can obey it, and be justified by it. But as Christ laid open the law in its spirituality to the Pharisees, in his sermon on the mount, that they might see their folly in seeking salvation by the law of works; so my advice to you is, to study the law, not only in the letter, but in the spirituality, that so "through the law" thou mayest become "dead to the law, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ, the Lord our righteousness."

3. Be frequently comparing your hearts and lives with this holy and spotless law of God, and see what abounding errors are in both. I am sure, if you did but look a little to your face in the glass of the holy law, you would see such a hell of abominations within and without you, that you will be ready to cry, "Innumerable evils compass me about." You who are ready to bless yourselves, and say or think you have a good heart toward God, you never yet saw yourselves in the glass of the holy law; if your eyes were opened, you would soon acknowledge with Paul, that "in *you* dwelleth no good thing," and that "every thought of *your* heart is evil

only, and evil continually." O sirs, believe this is the real case with you, and consequently, all the curses and threatenings of the broken law of works are standing in full force against you. This must needs be believed, the truth of the threatening applied and brought home, ere ever you can improve and apply the gospel; for I would have you remember, that there is a law-faith goes before a gospel-faith; and this law faith consists in a knowledge of the law in its spirituality, in an assent to the truth of its threatenings, and a particular application of them to the soul. The want of this is the reason of prevailing presumption and carnal security among the hearers of the gospel, which hinders them from believing in Christ, by virtue of the law of faith, which reveals and exhibits him; they lie intrenched behind an imaginary fortification of natural religion, formality, and morality, and there they think themselves safe against all the threatenings and thunders of the law of works. But, alas! what will this avail in the day of visitation, when God shall lay you in the balance, and say, "You are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting;" you want the righteousness of my Son, you want my image, you want my Spirit, you want a renewed nature; and therefore away with such a man! "Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross; Reprobate silver shall men call them, for the Lord hath rejected them."

4. I advise you not only to study the law of works, but also to study the gospel, or law of faith; the difference between these two, and their connexion in a gospel-dispensation. Ignorance of this makes a strange kind of a jumble in the doctrine of ministers, and in the exercise of a Christian. I endeavoured in the doctrinal part of this discourse to clear up a little something of the difference and harmony between these, and do not now repeat them.

5. Be persuaded that the law of faith lies open to you, and that you are as free to take the benefit of it as any other person whatever. It is one of the hellish policies of Satan, and of an evil heart of unbelief, to persuade the sinner, that the promise, or the law of faith, is not to them, contrary to God's express declaration, "The promise is unto you, and to all that are afar off: To you is the word of this salvation sent." Do not say, when you hear the law coming out of Zion, The promises and offers of salvation made through a Redeemer, God is speaking to the elect, or to believers, and others, but not to me. No, he is speaking to thee, sinner; "for Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And therefore, as you are to apply the threatenings of the law to works for your conviction and humiliation; so you are to believe and apply the gracious offers and promises of sovereign

grace in the gospel to you in particular; and do not imagine with yourselves, that God says one thing, and intends another; no, he speaks the truth in his heart, and you may read the thoughts of his heart by the words of his blessed mouth, the one so exactly agrees with the other. Do not rest satisfied with the general assent to the truth of the promise; but, under the conduct of the promised Spirit, venture the salvation of your souls upon it, and the faithfulness of him that made it. O sirs, the strength of omnipotence is in the promise; never did any soul perish that trusted it; "Abraham staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief," and the promise bore him through; and so will it all the seed of Abraham, all who truly believe it. But, say you, I think I could trust the promise, and the Promiser; but still I fear the promise does not belong to me. I answer, The promise belongs as much to you, to every one of you, as it did to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, or any of the saints now in glory, before they actually believed it. Can you doubt that you have a right to believe the promise of God, or to set to your seal that he is true? No, you affront God, and lose your own souls, if you do not. I conceive that there is a general mistake among the hearers of the gospel; they fancy they have no manner of concern in the covenant of grace, or the promises thereof, till they be actually within the bond of it. But do not mistake it; the covenant and promises belong to you, yea, to the whole visible church, in the dispensation. You have a confirmed right and warrant by faith to intermeddle with the covenant of grace, and all the blessings thereof, even before you believe: I own, indeed, that till you believe, you have no saving interest in Christ, or the benefits of the covenant; but before you believe, you have a confirmed right to lay hold upon the covenant by faith. The covenant, in the dispensation of it, belongs to all the hearers of the gospel, to the whole visible church; and if we cut off people's hands from the covenant and the promises, at the same time we cut them off from receiving Christ, when yet we are offering Christ to them; for it is by virtue of the covenant of grace, or promise, that sinners must receive and apply Christ. I do not speak without book, for the words of our Confession of Faith are, 'That the principal acts of saving grace are, a receiving, resting upon, and applying Christ, for righteousness, life, and salvation, by virtue of the covenant of grace;' and if by virtue of the covenant we are to receive Christ, surely we must not take away the covenant of grace from people, and yet bid them receive Christ; this were to destroy with one hand, what we build with the other. Now, seeing this is the case, that the law of faith lies open to you, that the promise and covenant is to you, make

particular application of it to your own souls, and lay the weight of your eternal salvation upon the faithfulness of a promising God in Christ. And, to encourage you to do it, consider that additional security he has given us to encourage our faith; he superadds his oath to his promise, and seals both with the blood of his Son, and the seals of baptism and the supper; and the three witnesses of heaven attest the truth of it, *the Father, the Word, and the Spirit:* and what more can the most jealous heart desire? Here is ground to believe without doubting, to believe with full assurance of faith.

6. If you would take the benefit of the law of faith, go to a court of grace, to a throne of grace, where the law of grace is enacted, and put a God of grace to the execution of his own laws or acts of grace, and be persuaded that he will take care to make them good and effectual to thy soul. This is the advice of the Spirit of God: Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27, after sovereign grace had enacted many gracious laws of faith, saying, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, A new heart will I give you, I will put my spirit within you;" it is added, ver. 37, "For these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel," &c. So that you see the promise must be pleaded at the throne of grace; only when you plead the benefit of the promise, or law of grace, take care you do not plead your own, but Christ's right: do not think that your own pleading, your own frame or qualification will entitle you to the promise, or the blessings promised; for this is just to run back to the law of works to found your claim and title to the covenant of grace, and the blessings of it. Remember in all your pleadings and wrestlings to go out of yourselves for a right to the promise to Christ; "in him they are all yea and amen;" he is the first Heir, and it is only in and through him, and his everlasting righteousness or satisfaction, that we can lay claim to any thing in heaven or in earth, since the forfeiture we fell under by the breach of the covenant of works in our first parents; therefore serve yourselves heirs to the promise as it is in Christ the covenant of grace is nothing else but a free disposition of eternal life, and of every thing belonging to it, by sovereign grace through the righteousness of Christ. Now, take things as God has laid them, and do not invert that order, by founding your right to the promise upon any thing in yourself.

7. *Lastly,* In pleading the law of faith, be sure to employ the "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation." God hears not sinners, but only through the mediation or intercession of his eternal Son. And therefore whatever business you have in the court of grace, whatever acts or laws of grace you would have sued and ex-

ecuted with respect to your souls, put all in the Advocate's hand, who "maketh intercession for the transgressors," and who is so well skilled in the laws of the court of grace, that he never lost a poor man's cause. If you will adventure to plead the promise, and present your own bills before God in your own name, and not in the name of the great Advocate with the Father, how can you expect to speed? Can you be accepted of the Father, when you put a slight upon the Son? No; "he hath made us accepted *only* in the beloved: Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, I will do it."

SERMON XVIII.

THE STONE REJECTED BY THE BUILDERS, EXALTED AS THE HEAD-STONE OF THE CORNER.*

PREFACE.

READER,

THE following sermon gave occasion to three days' warm debate in the Reverend Synod of Perth and Stirling, and has been the subject of much talk and speculation since that time. Whether the censures of men about it be just or unjust, is now submitted to the impartial world to judge. The sermon was copied from the author's original notes by another hand, who could read his characters, but was in no hazard of making any additions or alterations. Several things here were omitted in the delivery for the sake of brevity: but nothing material was delivered, but what comes abroad. And with reference to the expression quarrelled with, so soon as the author knew what passages of his discourse were pointed at by the Reverend Synod, (which was the day immediately after it was preached,) he took care to revise his notes, and make these expressions run in the terms in which they were delivered, as near as either he or some of the audience could remember.

The author's design in pitching and preaching upon that text, was what he could to raise the glory of the blessed Corner-stone, to set up the corruptions of the Jewish builders as so many beacons, that builders of our day might beware of them, and to cast in the small mite of his testimony against what, to him, appears

* Preached at the opening of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, at Perth, October 10, 1732.

an injury done, either to Christ personal or mystical. If these ends be reached, either in the preaching or publication, it will afford matter of joy to the author, whatever be the event of the depending process with respect to himself.

If any think, upon the reading of the following discourse, that there is too great freedom used with respect to the present steps of defection; let them remember, that there is now no other way left to bear testimony against such things, but by warning the world against them, from press or pulpit; representations and petitions from ministers or church-members at the bar, being utterly disregarded, and no access to enter any protest or dissent against these proceedings in the public records, for the exoneration of conscience, or the information of our posterity, that such things did not pass in our day without a struggle and testimony against them.

If any of the author's friends and well-wishers be afraid of farther trouble to him, upon the account of this sermon; let them know, that, through grace, he chooses rather to suffer with the oppressed members of Christ, than to enjoy all the ease and pleasure of those who oppress them in their spiritual liberties; which being the purchase of a Redeemer's blood will be reckoned for before the scene be ended. Heb xi. 24—26; 1 John iii. 16; 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.

The stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head-stone of the corner.—PSAL. CXVIII. 22.

IT is probable this psalm was penned by David, when the ark of God was brought up from the house of Obed-edom, to its proper place in Jerusalem, after the intestine broils between the house of David and Saul had happily issued in David's promotion, by the common consent of all the tribes, to the crown and kingdom of Israel. But though this was the occasion, yet the Spirit of God had in it a farther view, namely, to Christ himself, of whom David and his administrations were but a faint type and shadow.

David's accession to the throne was through many storms of opposition: although God had chosen and ordained him for the kingdom and government; yet he was opposed by the house of Saul, and those who adhered to that family: yet

after all, the house of David prevailed. Just so was it with the son of David, our glorious Redeemer: hell and earth combined against the Lord and his Messiah, but God had determined that the government should be upon his shoulders, that his King should be set upon his holy hill of Zion; and he carries his design against all opposers, as you see in my text, *The stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head-stone of the corner.*

I need not stay to prove that these words are to be understood of Christ, after the express application that is made of them to him by himself and his apostles in the scriptures of the New Testament, Matth. xxi. 42; Acts iv. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 7; 8; Eph. ii. 20.

In the words we may notice the following particulars, (1.) The metaphorical view in which the church is here represented; namely, that of a house or building. (2.) The character that our Immanuel bears with respect to this building: he is *the stone* in a way of eminence, without whom there can be no building, no house for God to dwell in among the children of men. (3.) The character of the workmen employed in this spiritual structure, they are called *builders.* (4.) A fatal error they are charged with in building of the house of God: they *refuse* the stone of God's choosing; they do not allow him a place in his own house. (5.) Notice the place that Christ should and shall have in this building, let the builders do their worst, he *is made the head-stone of the corner.* The words immediately following, declare how this is effected, and how the saints are affected with the views of his exaltation, notwithstanding the malice of hell and earth: "This is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes."

In discoursing on this subject, I shall just follow the order of the text now laid down, by explaining the particulars named, and then deduce a few inferences from the whole.

I. Let us take a view of the church under the notion of a *house* or *building.* This metaphorical view of the church is very frequent in the scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament: Is. ii. 2, 3: "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains.—And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob." The same way of speaking occurs also in the scriptures of the New Testament, 1 Cor. iii. 9: "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." Hence Paul, writing to Timothy, directs him how to behave himself in the church of God, which is the house of the living God.

Now, with relation to this house or building, I offer the following particulars:—

1. That though God took up house with man at his creation; yet by the fall of Adam the family was separated, God broke up house with man, the family was parted, and the breach was wide like the sea. God could have no fellowship with man; for what fellowship could there be betwixt light and darkness, betwixt God and Belial? and immediately man, like the prodigal, forsook God, and wandered into a far country of sin and vanity.

2. God had a stated design from eternity, that notwithstanding of this breach, he would have a house and dwelling with fallen man; he designed to take up house, and gather the family again; hence we are told, that "before the foundation of the earth, he rejoiced in the habitable parts thereof, and his delights were with the sons of men." The foundation of this building was laid in the council of peace, and all the stones and materials of it were sequestrated and set apart. From the ancient years of eternity, Christ was chosen as the foundation and the chief corner-stone: "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." And all the saints were elected as living stones, to be renewed, justified, adopted, sanctified, and eternally saved in him and through him: Eph. i. 3—5: "He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world; he hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love."

3. Before this designed building could go up, Heaven must be at an infinite expense; before one stone could be laid in the building, the glory of the infinite God must be veiled with a veil of flesh in the person of the eternal Son, the great Lawgiver must be made under his own law; God blessed for ever must be made a curse, and the holy One of God made sin. Justice had determined, that "without the shedding of blood there *should be* no remission of sin;" and except justice was satisfied, and the honour of the law repaired, God could never dwell upon honourable terms with man upon earth. Oh the expense that God is at in building this house! We must be redeemed from the hand of justice, "not with silver and gold, or such corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ," &c.

4. Every stone of this building is digged out of the deep and dark quarry of nature, being "dead in trespasses and sins, children of wrath even as others, alienated from the life of God through ignorance, aliens to the commenwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise:" in a word, there is not worse stuff in hell itself, than the stones of this building

are by nature. And who can quarrel with the great Builder for taking one stone out of the quarry, and leaving another behind him as he has a mind? only when we look to the rock whence we were hewn, and the pit whence we were digged, we may say, "Who made *us* to differ? *for* a Syrian ready to perish was *our* father."

5. The great engine the glorious Builder makes use of, for gathering the stones of the building, and carrying on the edifice, is the pure preaching of the everlasting gospel. This is what the prophet, Is. xxvii. 13, foretells: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." It pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. It is the gospel that is "the power of God unto salvation; for therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith," Rom. i. 16, 17. When Christ sent forth his apostles and ministers, as founders of the New Testament church, what were they to do? Their commission was, to go into all the world, and to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven: "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Hence the apostle declares, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

6. The church, thus gathered and united under Christ as a glorious head, is the house of God, or his family upon earth. He has a manifold right to her; a right by election, a right by redemption and purchase, a right by covenant and by possession. And if it be asked, what kind of a house is the church of God? I answer,

1*st*, It is his dwelling-house: Psal. lxxvi. 2: "In Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place is in Zion." God has no other rest amongst the children of men than his church: "The Lord hath chosen Zion: he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell." So that the tabernacle of God is with men." And, as a man takes pleasure in his house or lodging, so doth God take pleasure in his church: "The Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation. I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be unto them a Father, and they shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

2*dly*, The church is his treasure-house. Here it is that he disposes of the most valuable furniture he has in the world. Israel is "his peculiar treasure: The Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Here he has his crown and diadem: "Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God." Here he hath his *jewels*, as his people are called, Mal. iii. 17; in comparison of whom, all the rest of the world are but trash: "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." Before he lose his jewels and his portion, he will sacrifice nations and kingdoms for their safety: Is. xliii. 4: "Ever since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life; Egypt for thy ransom, and Ethiopia and Seba for thee."

3*dly*, The church is his banqueting-house: Cant. ii. 4: "He brought me into his banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love." Here it is he "makes unto all people" (in the external dispensation of the gospel) "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." And here it is that the souls of believers are entertained with meat and drink indeed, the hidden manna, and the fruits of the tree of life. And here it is that he himself is entertained with the graces of his own Spirit: Cant. v. 1: "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk." Thus, I say, the church is the house of the living God.

7. As the church is the house of God, or his family, so Christ is the only door of the house: John x. 9: "I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." And, "He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." No man can be reckoned a member of the church, far less a minister, no, not in the judgment of charity, except he make a credible profession of his faith in Christ, and have a corresponding walk and conversation; and he that comes into the house of God, and lays claim to the privileges of the church without it, the Master of the house, in his own time, will say to him, "Friend, how camest thou in hither?" And they who adventure to confer the privileges of the church upon those who have not come in by the door, Christ, and who, in the view of the world, are of a malignant spirit, enemies to the house of our God; these I say, are guilty of casting that which is holy to dogs, and of betraying the house of God, instead of ruling it to advantage.

8. Although this house or building be the object of the malice of hell and earth; yet, as it has stood since its erection in Paradise, so it shall stand while sun and moon endure in the firmament. Indeed, particular churches may be razed, but the catholic universal church shall stand the utmost efforts of the gates of hell: "The Lord is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: the Lord will help her, and that right early." Hence is that song, Psal. xlvi: "We will not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea," &c. All the storms that have blown upon her from hell and earth have only served, by over-ruling providence, to advance her true interest and glory: Is. liv. 11, 12: "Oh thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones."

II. The *second* thing proposed was, to *speak a little here of the character given to Christ, with relation to this building;* he is *the stone.* There are a great many stones in a building; but in this spiritual building of the house of God, Christ is *the stone,* in a way of eminence and excellency, as if the whole building were of one piece, intimating, that Christ and his church are so closely united as to become one body and one spirit; upon this account the whole building is called by the name of *Christ,* as the principal part thereof, 1 Cor. xii. 12: "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." So Jer. xxxiii. 16: "And this is the name wherewith she shall be called," viz. the church, *The Lord our righteousness;* the very name given to Christ himself, chap. xxiii. 6. I conceive that Christ is called the stone here, for the same reason that he elsewhere calls himself a rock, "Upon this rock will I build my church," to intimate that he is the strength and stability of his church. Now, the excellency and necessity of this stone, to the rearing and building of the house of God, will appear if we consider,

1. That he is the stone of God's choosing: 1 Pet. ii. 4: "Chosen of God and precious." Is. xlii. 1: "Behold, my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.—Fore-ordained before the foundation of the world."

2. He is the stone of God's approbation. Though he be *disallowed of men,* he had his Father's testimony from heaven with an audible voice, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And, as he is approved of God, so he is approved of by every wise builder; they will be ready to say with Paul, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all ac-

ceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

3. He is the stone of God's trying: Is. xxviii. 16: "Behold, I lay in Zion, a stone, a tried stone." He was tried in the furnace of his Father's wrath, and he abode the trial; for he came forth more glorious than ever, in his resurrection from the dead. He stood the trial of the rage of men and devils, who endeavoured to stop him in his redeeming work. All the saints in heaven, and all believers on earth, have tried him, and will give him this testimony, that "he is able to save to the uttermost."

4. He is the only living and life-giving stone, 1 Pet. ii. 4. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone. As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." He is "the resurrection and the life;" and all the stones of the building derive their life from him: 1 Pet. ii. 5: "Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house. He that hath the Son, hath life. Our life is hid with Christ in God."

5. He is the stone that is laid by the hand of JEHOVAH as a foundation in Zion: "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation," Is. xxviii. 16. He was laid decretively from eternity; he is laid doctrinally and declaratively in a preached gospel; and he is laid efficaciously in a day of power, when the sinner is, by the power of the eternal Spirit, determined to take hold upon him by faith; he is laid a foundation, and the only foundation of hope and help for perishing sinners. Men have been trying in all ages to lay other foundations, but still they have proved foundations of sand: "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." They who attempt to rear a church without Christ, or to build up to themselves a hope of salvation without him, have only built castles in the air, and their building always turned to naught.

6. He is the matchless and incomparable stone, for he is *the chief stone of the corner;* "The brightness of his Father's glory" is in him, "and the express image of his person." All created glory shrinks into nothing and darkness when he appears; for he is "fairer than the children of men, as the apple tree among the trees of the wood:" and he casts a lustre and glory on the whole building, and every stone in it, for we are "beautiful through his comeliness;" "the beauty of the Lord is upon" his saints.

III. The *third* thing to be discoursed a little, was in the workmen employed in rearing this spiritual building or fabric of the church, here called *builders.* Christ himself is the

principal builder to whom the work is committed: Zech. vi. 12, 13: "Behold, the man whose name is the BRANCH, and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory." But he employs officers under him for the carrying on of the work, and these are called *builders*. Kings, and those in civil authority, when in their sphere they lend their helping hand to advance and carry on the work of God, may be called builders of the church. But under the New Testament I find this term only applied to ministers of the gospel, ordinary or extraordinary: Eph. iv. 11, 12: "He gave some, apostles: and some, prophets: and some, evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers." For what end? It is *for the edification of the church*, or building the body of Christ: and 1 Cor. iii. 10. Paul declares there, that "according to the grace given *him, he*, as a wise master-builder, had laid the foundation." So that ministers of the gospel are especially the New Testament builders.

Now, with relation to these, there are only these few things I suggest:—

1. It is a very honourable employment to be a builder of the house of God. It is an employment wherein the Son of God as Mediator is engaged; and is it not an honour to be co-workers with him? David esteemed it an honour to be a door-keeper in the house of our God; but it is yet more so to be a builder of the house. And as the work is honourable, so the reward of grace is proportioned; for, if we keep the charge committed to us in building the house of God, we shall have place among them that stand by the heavenly throne: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

2. None can warrantably lay a stone in this building, except he be regularly called. What mason will put his hand to a building, unless he be employed by those who have warrant to call him? This is such a necessary circumstance, that Christ himself would not meddle with building his Father's house till he had his Father's call: "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron: so also Christ glorified not himself, to be made a high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee," Heb. v. 4, 5. There is a twofold call necessary for a man who meddles as a builder in the church of God; there is the call of God, and of the church. God's call consists, in his qualifying a man for the work, and inspiring him with a holy zeal and desire to employ those qualifications for the glory of God and the good of his church. The

call of the church lies in the free choice and election of the Christian people. The promise of conduct and counsel in the choice of men that are to build the church, is not made to patrons, heritors, or any other particular set of men; but to the church, the body of Christ, to whom apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are given. As it is a natural privilege of every house or society of men, to have the choice of their own servants or officers; so it is the privilege of the house of God in a particular manner. What a miserable bondage would it be reckoned for any family to have stewards or servants imposed upon them by strangers or enemies, who might give the children of the family a "stone for bread, or a scorpion instead of a fish," and poison instead of a medicine? And shall we suppose, that ever God granted to any set of men, patrons, heritors, elders, or whatever they be, a power to impose servants on his family, without their consent, being the freest society in the world? But I pass this at present; perhaps more of it may occur afterwards.

3. The builders of the house of God are not left to form or mould the house according to their own fancy; no, but they must follow "the pattern showed in the holy mount" of divine revelation.

When the tabernacle was reared, a platform of it was given to Moses; when the temple was to be built, a pattern of it was given to Solomon by his father; and every pin of the tabernacle, and every stone of the temple was to be regulated and disposed according to the divine order. Now, these were but types of the New Testament building, of which we now speak. Who builds a house without forming a plan of it to the builders? Who erects a society without giving orders about its government? They who assert the government of the church to be ambulatory, cast a reflection on the wisdom of God, which is not to be supposed of any wise man whatever. Now, I say, as builders of a house must renounce their own schemes, and follow the orders of the owner; so ministers and church-officers, in building the house of God, must renounce carnal policy, and the wisdom of the world, and follow the orders given by God in his word, the perfect rule of faith and manners both to ministers and church-members. What the particular model of the church should be, is a thing I hope beyond controversy amongst us, who are so solemnly engaged to maintain the doctrine, discipline, worship, and government of this church; and therefore I do not enter upon it now.

4. God has endowed men whom he calls to build his house, with different talents and abilities, according to the different services they are to be employed about in the work. There

are a great variety of gifts bestowed by Christ upon his ministers, all calculated for the good of the church of God in general: the apostle illustrates this argument at great length, 1 Cor. xii. through the whole of the chapter. If this were but duly considered, it would cure all manner of strife and emulation among the builders, that they should not grudge one against another.

5. The gifts of men, however edifying or well adapted for carrying on the work, will never do service without the blessing and countenance of the great Master-builder. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but God giveth the increase:" and it is well that it is so ordered of Infinite Wisdom, that men may not give greater glory to instruments than is due, and that the whole glory may redound to the Lord; for this end, he puts the "treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of him."

6. The work of God is many times exceedingly marred, through the weakness or wickedness of pretended builders. But this leads me to,

IV. The *fourth* thing proposed, which was, to *speak of the fatal error of these builders spoken of in my text;* they *reject* the stone, without which their whole building was nothing but a medley of confusion, however glorious it might appear in their own eyes: *The stone is rejected by the builders.*

They seemed to have a great zeal for the Messiah and his kingdom; yet when he comes, they do not allow him a room in his own house: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not;" and so they fulfilled Isaiah's prediction of him, Is. liii. 2: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men." And because they rejected him, he hath rejected them as a church and nation; and, O how happy had it been, if their error, and consequent ruin had served as a beacon to other churches, since their day, not to dash upon the same rock! But here a question naturally arises.

How did the Jewish builders reject the stone which God had ordained to be the chief stone of the corner? *Answ.* This came about through a great many corruptions which they introduced, both in principle and practice. I shall only name a few of them, and leave it to every one to judge how far such evils or corruptions are to be found in our own day.

1. Though they pretended a great regard to the holy law of God, and cried out upon Christ and his apostles as enemies to it; yet they narrowed and contracted the sense and meaning of it, confining it merely to the letter, without search-

ing into its extent and spirituality, which gave occasion to Christ's sermon on the mount. By these means, though their hearers might have some notions of moral honesty, yet could they have no notion of the depravation of nature, and of the deceit and desperate wickedness of their hearts, without which no man can ever know the need he has of the work of regeneration, or of a Saviour from sin.

2. Having pared off the spiritual meaning of the law, they sought justification by the works thereof, and thought a man's own personal obedience enough to recommend him to God; as is clear from Rom. ix. 31, 32: "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." And, Rom. x. 3; "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." They could frame no notion to themselves of justification by the imputed righteousness of the Messiah, though God had told them that their righteousness and their works could not profit them, that it was a bed too short, and a covering too narrow for them.

3. These builders, through the legality of their doctrine, shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; they would neither enter themselves, nor suffer others that were entering to enter. God had told them that the blessings of his covenant must be had without money, or price; but they would needs pawn their legal qualifications upon God, and barter the matter with him; and thus, instead of casting out the stones, or preparing the way of the people, (Is. lxi. 10,) they threw stones and stumbling-blocks in the way of the salvation of sinners by the Messiah.

4. These builders deadened the ordinances of God by their formality. Though they retained the shell of ordinances, they never regarded the end, either with respect to their own souls, or the souls of their people, which was fellowship and communion with God therein; for which reason God declares his abhorrence of his own institutions, Is. i. 11, 12, &c. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats," &c. One of the great sources of this evil was, that if a man had been trained up at the feet of Gamaliel for a few years, and got a smack of the learning then in vogue, it was enough in their opinion to qualify him for being a builder in the house of God, though in the mean time he was an utter stranger to the work of God on

his soul; as is evident from the instance of Nicodemus, who, when Christ tries him upon the head of regeneration, he babbles and speaks nonsense: John iii. 4: "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Hence is that sharp challenge, ver. 10: "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" There Christ speaks of it as a thing criminal, that men should be made teachers of the church, who were strangers to a work of grace; for what but dead formal worship could be performed by men "dead in trespasses and sins?"

5. They were continually dabbling in politics, and gave themselves up to the conduct of carnal wisdom and policy in the matters of God and his church; and through this carnal wisdom, they were led on to crucify the Lord of glory: "It is expedient that one man die for the people: and if he be not taken out of the way, the world will go after him; and so the Romans shall come and take away our kingdom." When once a church comes to stand upon the rotten prop of carnal wisdom and policy, she is near to ruin. It is true, ministers are to be "wise as serpents;" but the wisdom of the serpent will soon lead us off our feet to pernicious courses, if not attended with the simplicity of the dove; and therefore we need, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we should have our conversation in this world."

6. The Jewish builders valued themselves exceedingly upon their connexion with the rulers and great folk in that day; and having joined interests with them, treated the common people, especially those who owned Christ, and attended his ministry and that of his apostles, as an unhallowed mob; as is clear from John vii. from ver. 45, and downward; where they, having sent some of their officers to apprehend Christ, the officers return, declaring that "never man spake like this man;" to which the Pharisees reply, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed." As if the common people had been obliged to follow them, and the rulers with whom they connect themselves, by an implicit faith and obedience, without ever bringing their doctrine and actions to the bar of the law and testimony, to be tried there.

7. They and the rulers having got the ascendant in the sanhedrim, and other courts, they took care to keep the power upon their side, by bringing in none but men of their own stamp and spirit: and if any man adventure to open his mouth, or testify against their corruptions in principle or prac-

tice, presently combinations are formed, plots are laid, and the edge of the church's discipline, which they had grasped, is turned against him as a turbulent person, an enemy to the law and temple; as is clear from their management with Christ, his apostles, and the protomartyr Stephen. But yet, notwithstanding of their pretended regard to the temple, they admitted the buyers and sellers to enter into it, by which they turned that holy place into a den of thieves, as Christ tells them to their face, John ii. 16, and Matth. xxi. 13. And whatever regard they pretended to the law, by a show of sanctity before the world, yet they abandoned themselves to all manner of secret and heart wickedness: hence our Lord compares them to *painted sepulchres;* glorious without, but within full of dead men's bones and rottenness, Matth. xxiii. 27.

Again; however careful they were to cloak and palliate their secret wickedness, yet now and then it was breaking out, to the great scandal and offence of the poor people of God; by which means they made themselves contemptible, and caused many to stumble at the law, and abhor the sacrifices of the Lord, as administered by them; as is plain from Mal. ii. 8, 9: "Ye are departed out of the way: ye have caused many to stumble at the law: ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law."

Having lost the hearts of the people by these means, they gave themselves up to all manner of sloth and indolence, taking care to feed their own bellies, and enrich themselves with the good of this world, while in the mean time they entirely neglected the flock and heritage of God. Hence is that charge against them, by the prophet, Is. lvi. 10—12: "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink, and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant."

Those Jewish rulers ruled the Lord's people with rigour, invaded their freedoms and liberties, bound heavy burdens on them, which they themselves would not touch with one of their fingers; by this means the Lord's people were scattered from the worship of God in their synagogues, as sheep having no shepherd. Hence is that plain dealing by the pro-

phet, Ezek. xxxiv. 2—6: "Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds, Wo be to the shepherds of Israel, that do feed themselves; should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed; but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there was no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them."

In short, to such a degree of corruption were they arrived, that the holy and profane, the clean and unclean, were alike to them, provided they were of their way and party: Ezek. xxii. 25, 26: "There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey: they have devoured souls: they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated (*as in the original,*) offered violence to my law, and have profaned my holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean."

Thus, the Jewish church, and particularly her pretended builders, we see were sunk into the very dregs of corruption. And hence it came, that when the glorious and long looked-for Messiah actually appeared among them, upon the stage of this world, instead of giving him a reception suitable to his excellency, as Immanuel, God-man, they treated him with the utmost contempt. Though he opened his commission, and made it evident to the world, by his doctrine, miracles, and the whole of his conversation, that he was none other than the brightness of his Father's glory; yet they disparaged his person, denied his supreme Deity, esteeming him only as the son of the carpenter, contradicted his doctrine, and studied to obscure his miracles, by ascribing them to the power of Beelzebub the prince of devils; they blackened his character with reproaches, as though he had been a glutton, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners; and at length crucified him ignominiously, as though he had been a notorious impostor, betwixt two thieves; and when, after his resurrection from the dead, he came to them in the ministry of his apostles, bringing his righteousness and salvation near to

them, they finally rejected him, and all the offers of his grace; for which reason, God was provoked, by a heavy sentence of excommunication, to cut them off from being a church or nation, under which they are lying to this day, his blood being upon them and upon their children, according to their wish at his crucifixion. And thus we see how the stone of God's choosing was rejected by the builders. Let their example and ruin serve as so many beacons, that we of the Gentile churches may not dash ourselves upon the same church-ruining and soul-destroying rocks; which is the very use the apostle Paul makes of this subject, when writing to the Romans, chap. xi. 20—23: "Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness, and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Which melancholy event actually happened to the church of Christ at Rome, as we see at this very day; it being now the seat of Antichrist, and a synagogue of Satan.

The only thing that remains upon this head is, to answer the following question:—

Whence was it that the Jewish builders rejected Christ, the stone of God's choosing, trying, and laying?

Answ. 1. This fatal error of theirs proceeded from their ignorance of Christ, in the excellency of his person, and of the glorious mystery of redemption and salvation through him: Acts iii. 17: "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8: "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery;—which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." They were men of no despicable parts, capable enough to toss an argument; they thought themselves the only seers in Israel in their day: "Are we blind also?" Yet Christ declares them blind like moles, in things relating to his kingdom. The least of Christ's babes, whom they reckoned among the accursed mob, had more of the saving knowledge of God, and of the things of God, than they; and the blind leading the blind, both stumbled on the stumbling-stone, and fell into the ditch together.

2. Mistaken notions of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom was another cause of their rejecting this precious stone. They had formed a notion to themselves, without any real ground from scripture-prophecy, that the Messiah was to appear in the form of an earthly monarch, and that he was to lift up the head of the Jewish nation, and make the Romans, and all

the nations of the world,t heir vassals and tributaries; but, finding themselves mistaken, they disown and crucify him as an impostor. Which by the by, serves to discover what a dangerous thing it is, not to have right conceptions of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. I am persuaded, that carnal notions of the kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world, lie at the bottom of many of the evils and corruptions in the day in which we live.

V. The *fifth* thing in the method was, to *inquire what may be implied in Christ's being made the head-stone of the corner, notwithstanding of the attempts of the builders to justle him out of his place.*

1. Then, It implies Christ's exaltation and victory over all his enemies and opposers: he will have the better of them, let them do their worst: however Christ and his cause, interest, and people, may be borne down for awhile, yet the scales will turn, and, like the house of David, they shall prevail. Christ was personally oppressed and afflicted, "he drank of the brook in the way:" yet at length "he lifted up the head, and God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name." And as it was with Christ personally, so it will be with his injured members. However they be "afflicted, tost with tempests, and not comforted, yet God will lay their stones with fair colours, and their foundations with sapphires." Though Sion may be laid in ashes, yet she shall be built up again by the almighty God; and when the Lord brings her forth to the light, then "shame shall cover her who said, Where is the Lord thy God?"

2. It implies that God has a great regard for the glory of his Son, as the head and king of his church; and that it is his will, "that all men should honour him, even as they honour the Father." This was intimated by a royal mandate, issued forth from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." God does not reckon it any injury done to him as God Creator, that we worship and serve him in the person of the Redeemer, for "his name is in him;" his glory, his majesty, and other excellent perfections, are in him as they are in the Father; and therefore it is his will, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

3. It implies, that the whole spiritual fabric or building of the church hangs upon him, as the superstructure leans upon the foundation and chief corner-stone. "He shall build the temple, and bear the glory," says the prophet Zechariah; and Is. xxii. 24: "They shall hang upon him all the glory of

his Father's house." All the doctrines of the church, and truths of the everlasting gospel, lean upon him; he is their Alpha and Omega; hence we read of "the truth as it in Jesus;" they meet in him as the spokes of a wheel in the nave. All the promises meet in him; "they are in him yea, and amen." All the precepts lean upon his authority; for the law is "the law of Christ," it is his "yoke and burden." The whole discipline of the church hangs upon him; the keys of doctrine and discipline hang at his girdle. The government of the church pertains to him; for it is laid upon his shoulders. The ordinances and worship of the church hang on him; no sort of worship, or a part of worship, can be admitted, but what bears the impression of his institution. The officers of the church hang upon him for their commission, and success in their work. In a word, all the members of the church hang upon him: "The whole offspring and issue, the vessels of small quantity, from vessels of cups to vessels of flagons, hang on him, as upon a nail fastened in a sure place."

4. His being made the head-stone of the corner implies, that he is the alone centre of unity in the church; for the head-stone of the corner knits the whole building together, and if that be removed, the walls of the house fall asunder, and so the whole fabric is ruined. If we do not hold the head-stone of the corner, by which the whole building is supplied and knit together, the fabric of a church, however politically framed, can never stand long. And the reason why the house is tottering at this day, is because there is too much of receding from the corner-stone. Usually, indeed, in a time of defection, the pulpits of those builders whose hands are deepest in it, ring with the doctrine of peace; and if a tongue be moved against the corrupt measures they are going into, the cry is raised, "These that turn the world upside down, are come hither also;" while in the mean time it is such as depart from the corner-stone that ruin and tear the building, and not they who give warning to the house or family of its being in danger of falling. They who do give warning may lay their account to be beaten by their fellow builders, that are losing the corner-stone. But this needs be no surprise, for in all ages Christ's witnesses have tormented them that dwell upon the earth; and it needs be no discouragement, for though they may be killed and buried, yet there will be a resurrection both of names and persons.

5. His being the head-stone of the corner implies, that Christ is the beauty and ornament of his church; for much of the beauty and ornament of the building lies in the corner-stone. We are told, the daughters of Zion were "like a corner-stone, polished after the similitude of a palace." Christ is

the glory of his people Israel:" and no wonder, for he is "the brightness of his Father's glory." When he is in the midst of his church, countenancing his ordinances, and judicatories, then it is "she looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners:" but when he departs, all the glory departs, and a dismal Ichabod succeeds:" "Yea, wo also unto them when I depart from them;" as may be seen at this day in the once famous churches of Lesser Asia, and other places where Christ had once flourishing churches. They departed from the chief corner-stone, in doctrine, discipline, worship, and government, and this provoked him to depart; and upon his departure, the songs of their temples were turned into howlings.

6. It implies, that they who would build the church of Christ must still have him in their eye, and that the whole of their conduct and administration in the house of God must be regulated with a view to his glory and honour. If in building a house the chief corner-stone be not kept in view, irregular work cannot miss to ensue: just so is it in the case in hand; if we shall pretend to build the house of God; and do not keep our eyes on Christ, and his honour and interest, whether in matters of discipline or doctrine, instead of building the church, we only disorder and disturb it, and throw all into confusion. When we begin to work by carnal policy, or to have a sinister eye upon serving the lusts and humours of men, great or small, or our own worldly interests, and not the glory of our great Redeemer, we but ruin and pull down the church of Christ, instead of building it; and are fair to bury our name, our ministry, and our own souls, and the souls of multitudes, in the rubbish of it. Therefore there is much need of disinterested views in the management of the affairs of Christ. We that are ministers, as well as others, had much need to learn the lesson of self-denial; to deny our own wisdom, and our worldly interest, as a trifle in respect of his glory, and the advancement of his kingdom.

7. The text implies, that God and corrupt builders are driving quite different measures and designs. The builders reject the stone, but God will have it to be the head-stone of the corner; and which of the parties shall prevail, it is easy to judge. Christ shall sit at his Father's right hand, till all his enemies be made his footstool. He will break them that rise up against him as a potter's vessel. "I have set my King, (says the Lord,) upon my holy hill of Zion;" and who is he that will dethrone him?

VI. What was last proposed in the method, was the *Application* of the whole. All the use I shall make of what has been said, shall be wrapt up in the following inferences:—

Inf. 1. From what has been said, we may see the excellency of the church of Christ; why, she is a building, a house for God to dwell in among the children of men. So valuable is this building, that this whole visible creation is only a theatre or scaffold for rearing the house; and whenever the building is completed, the scaffold will be taken down, and committed to the flames. To discover the high estimate God puts upon his church, he calls her by the most endearing names and epithets. He designates her his *spouse*, his *love*, his *dove*, his *undefiled*, his *treasure*, his *portion*, his *Hephzibah* and *Beulah*, his *bed*, his resting-place, his walking-place, and his dwelling-place. A whole Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, lay themselves out in their particular economy for the upbuilding of this house: the grace of the Father, the love and blood of the Son, and all the gracious influences and operations of the Holy Ghost, are laid out for carrying on the work. The whole administrations of providence in the government of the world are adjusted for the benefit of the church, and the faithful members thereof. For this end the reins of administration, the keys of hell and death, were committed into the hands of Christ; for "God hath given him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body. The Father hath put all things into the hand of the Son, that so all the wheels of providence might be rolled and turned about "for the good of them that love him, and who are the called according to his purpose." The whole institution and administration of gospel ordinances, and all the officers of his ordination, whether ordinary or extraordinary, are designed for her edification, as we see in that forecited Eph. iv. 11—13, &c. This may let us see what a valuable trust we have among our hands, to whom God has committed the affairs of the church, and how tenderly it concerns us to manage them, even like those who are to make an account to the great Lord of the house.

Inf. 2. Is Christ *the stone* in a way of eminence? Then we may see how necessary and useful it is to preach Christ; why, he is *the stone* by way of eminence, the stone of God's laying, of his choosing, and the stone which God will have for *head-stone of the corner*. Paul, as a wise master-builder, laid this foundation among his hearers, and declares that "another foundation can no man lay." It is "Christ whom we preach." "I desire," says he, "to know nothing among you save Christ, and him crucified." The whole of the scripture revelation meets in him as its centre: all the histories, prophecies, promises, types, precepts, doctrines, and ordinances, of the word, are just full of Christ. The whole Bible, what is it but the testament of Christ, and the testimonial that Christ

brought from heaven? "These are they which testify of me." "These things are written, that ye may believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in him." And to be sure what is the scope of the whole revelation of the mind of God in the word, ought to be the scope and design of all our sermons. Whatever particular doctrines we insist upon, ought still to be ingrafted upon the blessed Branch that springs out of the root of Jesse; for the truth is only rightly dispensed, and rightly known "as it is in Jesus." Hence the great Mr. Durham tells us, in his first sermon on Is. liii. that "Christ stands under a fourfold relation to preaching: 1. He is the text of it. All preaching is to explain him; and that preaching which does not stand in relation to him, is a preaching besides the text. 2. He is the ground-work and foundation of preaching. So that preaching without him wants a foundation, and is but building castles in the air. 3. He is the great end of preaching, namely, to set him on high in the hearts and affections of our hearers. The design of preaching is not to make ourselves, but our Master, great, to cause his name to be remembered. 4. He is the very power and life of preaching; for he is "the power of God and the wisdom of God;" and the gospel is called "the power of God unto salvation, because therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith."—Thus far that great man.

Inf. 3. If the ministers of the gospel be builders of the house, then see hence the need of trying a man's acquaintance with Christ and the power of religion, before he is admitted to ministerial communion, as a fellow-builder in the house of God. Why, that man who is not really acquainted with Christ in an experienced way, may be fair to reject the stone of God's choosing, and so ruin the building, and bury himself and many souls in the ruins of it. Masons know one another, they have certain signs and words by which they are capable to distinguish men of their own art and business from others; so, skilful builders in the house of God are capable, by a spiritual discerning, to know who are fit for being admitted to the work of the Lord, and who not. If such a discerning be given, even to church-members, as to "try the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world," 1 John iv. 1; much more may be supposed that this discerning faculty is to be found among faithful ministers of the gospel. Hence is that of the apostle to Timothy, 2 Epist. ii. 2: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Inf. 4. Is it so that the stone is rejected by the builders?

Then see hence what a fatal and pernicious thing a corrupt, erroneous, and ignorant ministry is to the church of Christ: why, they spoil, mar, and destroy the whole building; they run counter to the great plot of Heaven, by casting away the stone, which God has ordained to be the chief stone of the corner. The new mode of preaching some men have fallen into with their harangues and flourishes of morality, while Christ is scarcely named, from the beginning to the end of their discourse, I look on as a plot of hell to throw out the corner-stone, in order to bring us back to Heathenism or Anti-christian darkness. Christ is "the light of the world;" and if he be removed, or shuffled out, where are we, but just among the "dark places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of horrid cruelty?" So that, I say, a corrupt ministry, whatever be their fine parts, are the very bane of the church of Christ.

Inf. 5. If it be God's great design, that Christ should be the chief stone of the corner; if this, I say, be the resolution of Heaven; then see hence, that all the attempts of hell for the depression of Christ and the ruin of his cause, whether by open enemies, or pretended builders, shall be abortive in the issue; for "the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure," in spite of hell and earth. And what is his pleasure and counsel? Why, here it is, *The stone which the builders rejected, the same shall become the head-stone of the corner.* The gates of hell have made many an attempt to get the stone of God's choosing rejected, in order to the ruin of the church; but they have never yet prevailed, and never shall: Infinite Wisdom has always "taken the wise in their own craftiness, and turned the counsel of the froward headlong," and made these very devices of hell and its instruments subservient to lift the corner-stone higher in the building, to the shame and ruin of those who attempted to reject it. This "little stone cut out of the mountain," has always proved too hard for all the metals that clashed with it, and it will be so to the end of time.

Inf. 6. See from what is said, what it is makes a flourishing church. It is not her external peace, plenty, or prosperity; not her connexion in politics with kings or parliaments, patrons, heritors, or any other sort of men; but her connexion with the chief corner-stone. This, and this only, is what beautifies the whole building, and makes her "increase with the increase of God."

Inf. 7. See hence great ground of lamentation and humiliation at this day. The stone is rejected, which God would have to be the chief stone of the corner. Is he not rejected in his prophetical office, through the prevailing ignorance and

unbelief that is to be found among the hearers of the gospel? The old complaint may be still renewed in our day, "Who hath believed our report?" Is he not rejected in his priestly office, while the generality, with the Jews, "go about to establish their own righteousness, and refuse the righteousness of God?" And is he not rejected in his kingly office and headship in his church, by the abounding profanity, atheism and immorality of our day; by the generality of professed Christians breaking his bands, and casting his cords from them? I cannot now stand to give a full narrative of the injuries that have been done to the royal prerogative of this King of kings, and Lord of lords.

The Roman Antichrist has for a long time invaded the prerogative of the Son of God, by usurping a headship over the church: "He sits in the temple of God, exalting himself above all that is called God." At the imperfect reformation of England, when they threw off the Pope as the head of the church, they lodged the same in the King, declaring him to be supreme head in all cases civil or ecclesiastic. In the late days of Scotland's apostacy from God, the crown was sacrilegiously taken from Christ's head among us also, and set upon the head of a persecuting apostate. Dreadful were the invasions and encroachments that were made upon the crown-royal of the King of Zion, by king, parliaments, and persons of all ranks; particularly by the act recissory, by which axes and hammers were lifted up upon the carved work of the temple, hewing down the glorious work of reformation, restoring abjured Prelacy, rescinding the obligations of our solemn covenants, yea, ordering them to be burnt at the cross of Edinburgh, by the hand of the common hangman, prosecuting to the very death all that owned a work of reformation.

In those bloody days, the headship and sovereignty of Christ was contended for by many of the Lord's worthies even unto death; and it has been the peculiar honour of the church of Scotland, particularly in those days of persecution, to bear testimony to Christ, as the alone head and king of his church, in opposition to those dangerous and heaven-daring encroachments that were made upon it. And it is much to be regretted and lamented, that since the Lord turned back our captivity, in any measure, at the late wonderful revolution, by which we were freed from the yoke of lordly Prelacy, we have not been so zealous for our great King, and his prerogatives, which were so much invaded, as might have been expected, upon our deliverance from that Egyptian thraldom. I do not remember of any particular act of assembly, since the revolution, by which the rights of the crown of Christ are asserted, in opposition to the encroachments that were made

upon them in those days of public apostacy and persecution. Yea, instead of that, are there not invasions and encroachments made upon the authority of Christ, and the immunities of his kingdom, even since that period, particularly in the end of Queen Anne's reign, when designs were formed for the overthrow of a Protestant succession? His headship and authority was invaded by an almost boundless toleration of all errors in doctrine, and corruptions in worship, excepting Popery, and blasphemy against the Holy Trinity; two evils that never prevailed more in the memory of man in these lands, than since the toleration act was passed. His authority was at the same time invaded by the act restoring patronages, by which power is given to a malignant lord or laird, to present a man to take the charge of precious souls, who has perhaps no more concern about their salvation than the Great Turk. And is it not matter of lamentation, to see some of the judicatories of this church, whose province it is to contend for the sovereignty of Christ, and the rights of his subjects, falling in with patrons and heritors of the nation, in opposition to the known rights of the Christian people to elect and choose their own pastors? How are the rights of the Lord's people invaded and trodden upon by violent settlements up and down the land? A cry is gone up to heaven against the builders, by the spouse of Christ, like that, Cant. v. 7: "The watchmen that went about the city, found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me." A cry and complaint came in before the bar of the last assembly, for relief and redress of these, and many other grievances both from ministers and people; but instead of a due regard had to it, an act is passed confining the power of election to heritors and elders, by which a new wound is given to the prerogative of Christ, and the privilege of his subjects. I shall say the less of this act now, that I had opportunity to exonorate myself, with relation to it, before the national assembly, where it was passed. Only allow me to say, that whatever church authority may be in that act, yet it wants the authority of the Son of God. All ecclesiastical authority under heaven is derived from him; and therefore any act that wants his authority, has no authority at all. And seeing the reverend synod has put me in this place, where I am in Christ's stead, I must be allowed to say of this act, what I apprehend Christ himself would say of it, were he personally present where I am, and that is, that by this act the corner-stone is receded from, he is rejected with his poor members, and the rich of this world put in their room; I say, were Christ here present, I think he would say in relation to that act, "In as much as ye did it

unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me." By this act Christ is rejected in his authority, because I can find no warrant from the word of God, to confer the spiritual privileges of his house upon the rich beyond the poor: whereas by this act, the man with the gold ring and gay clothing, is preferred to the man with the vile raiment and poor attire. I add, farther, that this act, I judge to be inconsistent with the principles and the practices of the best reformed churches, asserted in their public confessions of faith, and particularly with the known principles of this church, since the reformation, asserted in our books of discipline, which we are bound by solemn covenant to maintain. I am firmly persuaded, that if a timely remedy be not provided, this act will very soon terminate in the overthrow of the church of Scotland, and of a faithful ministry therein, in regard that the power of electing ministers is thereby principally lodged in the hands of a set of men who are generally disaffected to the power of godliness, to the doctrine, discipline, worship, and government of this church, as well as to the government of our gracious sovereign King George, and the Protestant succession in his family.

All sound Presbyterians, who read the history of our forefathers, generally approve of the practice of Mr. Samuel Rutherford, Mr. James Guthrie, and other ministers of this church, who protested against the resolutions, as a thing inconsistent with our covenants, and prejudicial to the work of reformation, although thereby the door was only opened to malignants to come into places of civil or military trust; and we who live at this time of day, may see the pernicious effects these resolutions had in the church of Scotland. But what would our forefathers have thought, or what will succeeding generations think of this act of assembly; by which malignants are vested, not with a civil or military, but with an ecclesiastical power, in the settlement of the generality of ministers through the church of Scotland? By which means the church of Scotland, and her sacred privileges, are rendered exceedingly cheap, even in the eyes of her avowed enemies; this being a compliment they neither expected nor desired at our hands. But, after all, I have good reason to believe, that this act is far from being the mind of the generality of presbyteries throughout this national church; and therefore would gladly hope a seasonable stand shall yet be made against it, in order to prevent its pernicious consequences.

My *last* inference shall be in a word of *Exhortation.* Are ministers of the gospel builders of the church, and is it the great plot of Heaven to have Christ exalted as the head-stone

of the corner? Then let me call and exhort my reverend brethren and fathers (and I desire to apply the exhortation to myself,) to concur with heart and hand, in lifting up the chief corner-stone, and making his name to be remembered to all generations, that the people may praise him for ever and ever. However he has been, or still is rejected by other builders: yet let us study to exalt him, saying one to another, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

I shall not stay, after what has been said, to use many motives: only, in so many words, let us consider the excellency of his person, and the relation he bears to us and others of our tribe or family, both by nature and office; he being "Immanuel, God with us," ordained the great Prophet, Priest, and King of the church, to answer the maladies and miseries of ignorance, guilt, and bondage, we are brought under by the sin of the first Adam. Let us consider, that it is his Father's will, "that all men should honour him, even as they honour the Father" himself; yea, his Father has "highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name," and hath ordered that "every tongue shall confess, that Jesus is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Let us consider, that this is the work of the Holy Ghost, the great scope of all his dictates in the word, and of all his graces, influences, and operations, in the heart, being to lift up this corner-stone: John xvi. 14: "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." This is the work in which angels delight to be employed: with what alacrity do they celebrate his nativity, and tell the tidings of it to the shepherds! Luke ii. 10, 11: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." And thereupon, ver. 13, 14: "a multitude of the heavenly host praise God, saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men." This was the work of all the prophets under the Old Testament; they all prophesied of him, "testified of his sufferings, and of the glory that should follow." They were as so many harbingers, sent to prepare the world for the reception of this glorious person. All the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, given by him to the New Testament church, have had this as the great scope of their ministry, to edify the body of Christ, by lifting up the glory of this head-stone of the corner, Rev. iv. 10. In short, this is and has been the business of the church militant here upon earth, and will be the work of the church triumphant through eternity. They all with one voice cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,

to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," Rev. v. 12. And is it not glorious encouragement to us, to lift up the honour of our Redeemer, when we have such company to join us in our work?

Again, let us consider that Christ is *the stone*, without which there can be no building, for he is the Church's all; "Christ is all, and in all." He is her light, her life, her righteousness, her strength, her peace, her food, her clothing, her wisdom, her holiness. So that if he be wanting, all is wanting, and the church is ruined. We cannot answer the commission we bear from our great Master, if we do not exalt the chief corner-stone. It is "Christ whom we preach," Col. i. 28. We are to be of Paul's spirit, "to know nothing" among our hearers, "but Christ, and him crucified;" we are "always to triumph in the revelation of Christ, so as the savour of his knowledge may be made manifest by us in every place." To conclude, we can never finish our course with joy, and the ministry we have received of the Lord, except this be the great scope of our work whether in doctrine, discipline, worship, or government.

I shall shut up this discourse with a few advices in order to our being successful builders of this glorious fabric, of which Christ is the head-stone of the corner.

1. Then, Let us beware of the fatal errors before mentioned by which the Jewish builders ruined their once glorious fabric, and buried themselves in the ruins of it. Let us beware of those doctrines, vented in our day, which disparage the person of our glorious Redeemer, and derogate from his supreme and independent Deity, or his headship and sovereignty in his church. Let us beware of nauseating the spirituality of his doctrine, and the sublime mysteries of our holy religion, preferring to it the harangues of moralists. When we preach the law, let us open it in its extent and spirituality, so as to turn its edge upon the heart and conscience, that it may be "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Let us preach up the everlasting righteousness of the Son, as the only ground of a sinner's justification, and beware of every thing that has the least tendency to foster a sinner in his hope of salvation by the works of the law. Let us beware of blocking up the door of access to Christ, by legal qualifications, which are no where to be had but in Christ himself. Let us beware of formality either in preaching or praying, by which we may deaden the ordinances of God, to our own souls, or the souls of our hearers; and, in order thereto, let us take care to license or lay hands upon none, but such as, in the judgment of charity, we have reason to think are acquainted with the power of godliness, even though

they have been trained up in literature at the foot of a professor of divinity. Let us beware of carnal policy in the matters of Christ's kingdom and glory. Let us beware of valuing ourselves upon the favour of men, great or small. Especially let us take care, that we be not swayed in the matters of Christ with the favour of great men; for this has been "a snare on Mizpeh, and a net spread upon Tabor." Let us study impartially the exercise of discipline, and beware of turning the edge of it against them that deserve it least. And let us set ourselves to stop these passages into the house of God, by which thieves and robbers most ordinarily enter, that the house of God be not turned into a den of thieves.

2. In order to our being successful builders, let us seek the builders' word from the great Master builder; for there is a word which Christ gives to his faithful ministers, by which the art of building is much conveyed, John xvii. 14: "I have given them thy word." Without this word from the mouth of Christ, we will never know the true art of building the church: by this word the man of God is made a perfect builder, thoroughly furnished to every good work. And if you ask me, what is that word? I answer, It is an experimental acquaintance with the power of the word upon the soul, particularly the knowledge of that leading mystery, "God manifested in the flesh."

3. Let us take care that every stone of the building correspond with the foundation and corner-stone; whatever doctrines or practices do not hang right with this regulating stone; let that be cast. In order to which, let us examine our own and others' doctrines and conversation by the plumb line and infallible rule of the word: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isa. viii. 20.

4. Let us observe the signs of the times; and whenever we discern the danger coming, either from open enemies, or pretended friends, let us give the cry, like faithful watchmen; and, though fellow-builders be offended, there is no help for that. It is a heavy charge that is laid by God against some, as above, that they were "dumb dogs, that could not bark," but preferred their own carnal ease to the safety of the church, Isa. lvi. 10—12.

5. Lastly, Let us wrestle much at a throne of grace for the countenance of the great Master, and assistance of his Spirit; for "except the Lord build the house, the builders build in vain. Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but it is God that giveth the increase."

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